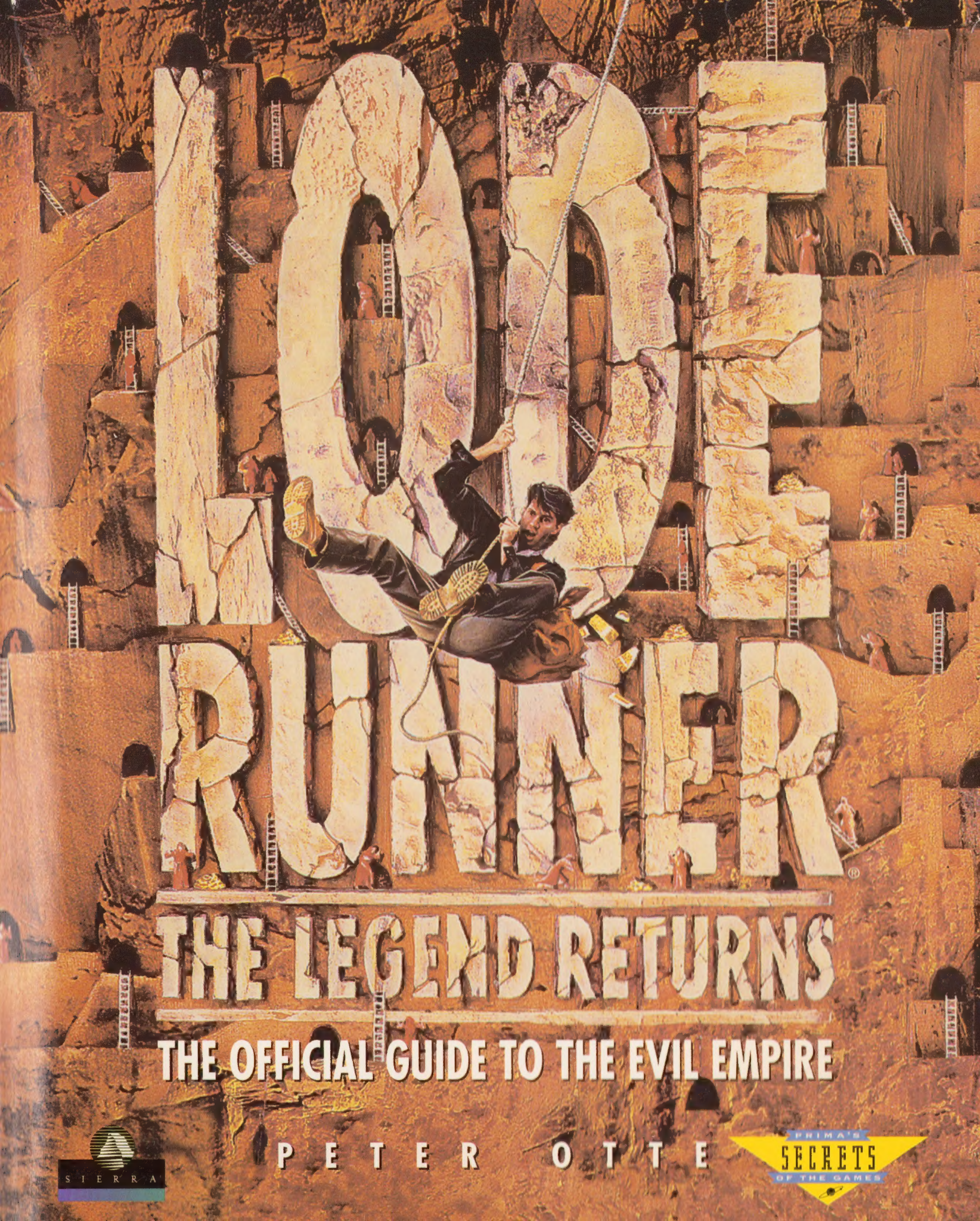


The background of the entire cover is a detailed illustration of a jungle temple. A man, Indiana Jones, is shown in the center, climbing a massive stone letter 'O' that is part of the word 'DOOR'. He is wearing his signature fedora and a dark jacket, and is holding a rope. The temple is built into a cliff face, with many smaller arches and windows visible. Small figures of people can be seen in some of the arches. The overall color palette is dominated by browns, oranges, and yellows, giving it an aged, adventurous feel.

DOOR

THE LEGEND RETURNS

THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TO THE EVIL EMPIRE

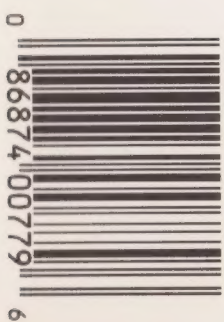
PETER OTTE



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Lode Runner

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Lode Runner

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The Legend Returns

The Official Guide to the Evil Empire

Peter Otte



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Dedication

*This book is dedicated to my mother and father,
for their love and honesty, and to Michael Riley,
my great friend and mentor.*

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My name is Jake Peril, and I'm about to let you in on a top secret mission. If my old friends knew my true identity, they'd probably connive to get a cut of the action. They'd tell you that no amount of gold, however colossal, is ever worth the risk of going up against the Evil Empire and the ruthless mad monks. And yet, that's exactly what I do. You have to be pretty insane to infiltrate the netherworlds of the Evil Empire, risking life and limb cleaning the place out. Maybe I'm a little touched. I have my share of scrapes and scars to prove it. But I guess I just prefer living life on the edge—especially when there's big money to be made!

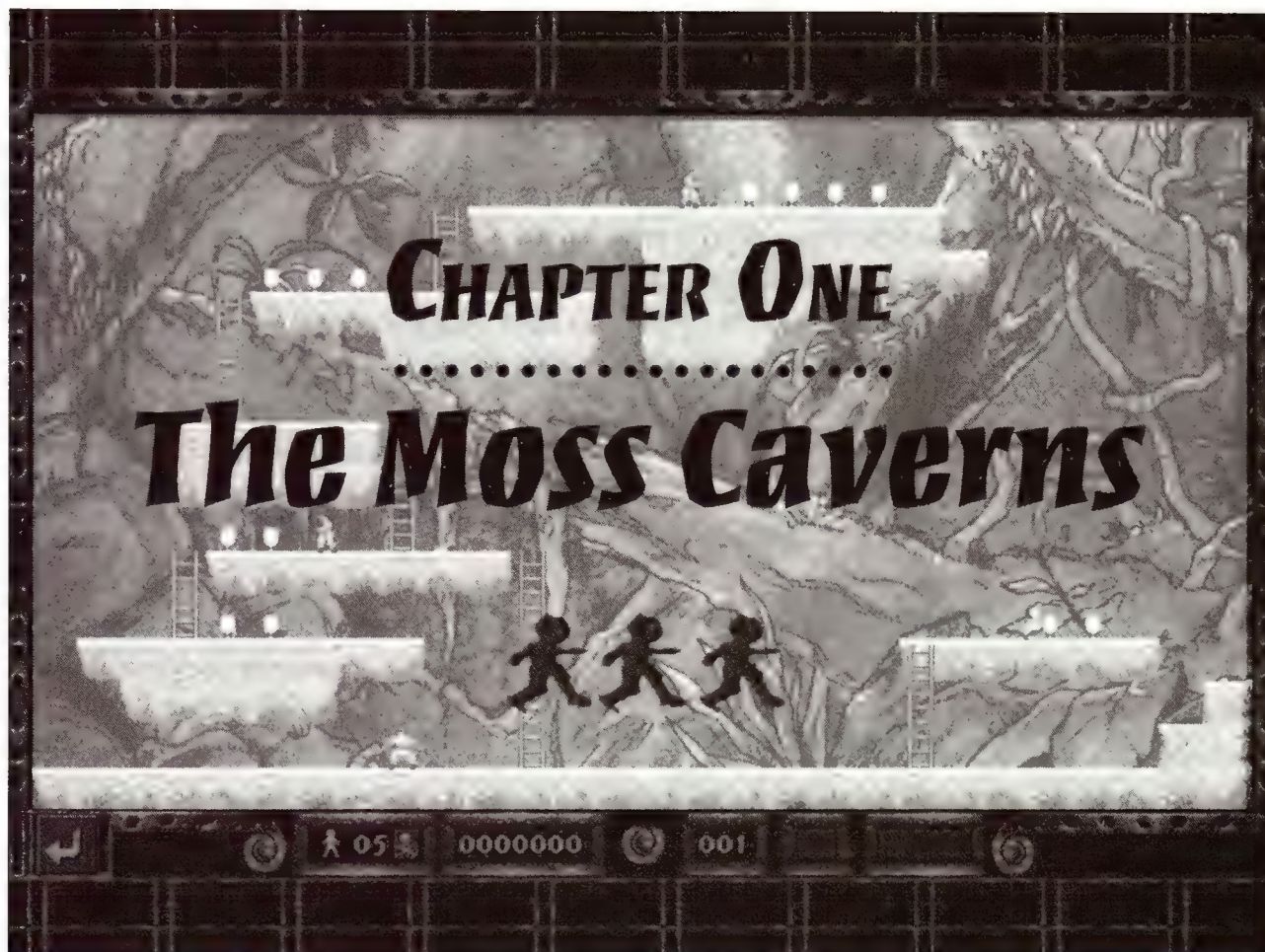
It wasn't my idea. Two suits from the CIA came to *me*. "Jake," they said, "you take this assignment, and we'll let bygones be bygones." I've got a bit of a reputation, you see—OK, a rap sheet longer than a mad monk's cavern.

.....

Then this guy steps forward—I think his name was Victor—and he opens up this suitcase and shows me a very sci-fi-looking pistol, which he calls a laser blaster. It's a classified weapon. It's got some kind of nuclear fusion reactor core with unlimited firepower. Then it accidentally goes off, and Victor blows a nice fat hole in the floor of my penthouse condo.

"OK," I said. "I'll plunder the Evil Empire's underground vaults if it'll help you guys in your quest to uphold justice and prevent them from controlling the world—and if you fix my floor."

Since then, I've sold the condo. Now, when I'm not busy dodging monks, I spend most of my time on my 300-foot yacht cruising the Virgin Islands. The days blur together. Last week, I caught a marlin. Then again, maybe it was the week before. In my free time, I sometimes wonder how I went from Robin Hood to Robinson Crusoe. But there's no secret to how I make my money. I get it the old-fashioned way: I steal it! I'll show you how I do it if you can stand my annoying tendency to mix metaphors. And don't get any funny ideas. Nobody knows where I stash the loot, so if I'm gone, the money's gone. Nobody knows where it is except me. Anybody tries anything funny, the booty's gone forever. But look at it this way. You'd much rather deal with me than those crooks of the Evil Empire.



After meeting with the suits, I understand my objective perfectly: take the money and run. Snatch up every last piece of gold down to the last speck of gold dust—without getting caught. I’ve never stolen from thieves before, but then again I’ve never worked for the government before either. The one good thing about all this: I get to use a terrific weapon—the laser blaster.

The moss caverns kind of remind me of my college fraternity: dank and malodorous. The moss isn’t like anything you’ve ever seen or smelled before. Normal moss may be dense and mat-like, where you can easily rip it off in tufts. Not this stuff. It’s ten times tougher and grows back faster than the national debt. If I blast to my left or right, the force of the blast creates a bowl-shaped hole that lasts several seconds, then closes up again. If not careful, I could fall into the hole myself with very dire consequences. Once in, there’s no way out except death.

I should probably market this stuff. Think of all the football stadiums, baseball diamonds, golf courses and soccer fields around the planet that could benefit from this super moss. It doesn't need watering and it grows back within seconds. Maybe not ideal for putting green, but you get the idea.

But I digress. Thieves are like cats (hence the term cat burglar). They say cats have nine lives; in this case, I started with five. If I fall into a turf hole, the moss will envelop and strangle me to death, resulting in the loss of one life. Each time I successfully complete a cavern, I earn an extra life—all those extra lives will come in handy later.

Wherever I go, I carry my trusty laser blaster with me. Developed by the CIA and paid for by your taxes, this reliable weapon never runs out of fire power. I use it to trap the mad monks, create escape routes, and dig out buried treasure. But the laser blaster also has real limitations. For one, I can't shoot a mad monk and be done with him. The blaster is too heavy to hold straight out (it's an early model), so I can only fire downward to my immediate left or immediate right. And it only works on the turf itself, not on the solid slabs of bedrock that crop up in strategically difficult places. Second, the monks aren't human. Maybe they were once, but their austere religious practices have made them invincible, if not immortal. Buddhists and Hindus may talk about reincarnation, but these guys do it right before your eyes. They possess a satanic element, and their special powers make them immune to the blaster. And they're very good at cultivating body odor through lack of hygiene. Man, I haven't come across bad breath this bad since I met *Leisure Suit Larry*.

TREASURE MAP

NOTES NOTES NOTES

To avoid confusion, let me clear up a few important terms—not all the terms, only those that beg clarification. I've also cleared up a few nagging linguistic details. If a term does not appear here, then no clarification is needed.

NOTES NOTES NOTES

For clarity, why not just pick a term and stick to it. For example, why say hand-over-hand bar, jungle beam, and parallel beam, all for the same object? On the other hand why not? (Game-players are likely to bypass this explanation and go directly to the part of the book that deals with whatever trouble they are having in the game.)



Directions: To avoid confusion, I never refer to right or left. If you look at my snapshots, you'll see that my left is your right. So I call out directions using the old nautical terms north, south, east, and west. From time to time, I also refer to points in between as north-west, southwest, northeast, and southeast.



Tiers, Terraces, Ledges, etc.: Except where defined in my notes, I describe the features of the subterranean worlds in fairly conventional terms, despite their unconventional nature. A tier is a long horizontal surface that may span the width of the cavern, a terrace somewhat smaller, and a ledge smaller still. Caves have no outlet, whereas tunnels do. A cliff or bluff refers to a large mass of turf (moss, fungus, etc.). Tufts are usually small outgrowths too large to bypass, but too small to call a bluff.



Treasures: There are basically four different kinds of treasure in the evil empire: gold coins (tokens), golden skulls (deathheads), golden bars (ingots), and treasure chests. The golden skulls give me a cold chill; obviously, the evil empire maintains a decadent aesthetic. Still, as far as I'm concerned, gold is gold—whatever its final shape or form.



Ladders: Ladders have a standard width and space between rungs, but they vary in height. A *step ladder* stands about my height or a little taller and often, but not always, doesn't connect to anything above it. A *painter's ladder* measures several times my height and often connects to a higher or lower level. *Long ladders* stretch up the full height of the cavern.



Hand-over-hand bar: I sometimes refer to this either as a jungle beam or parallel beam.



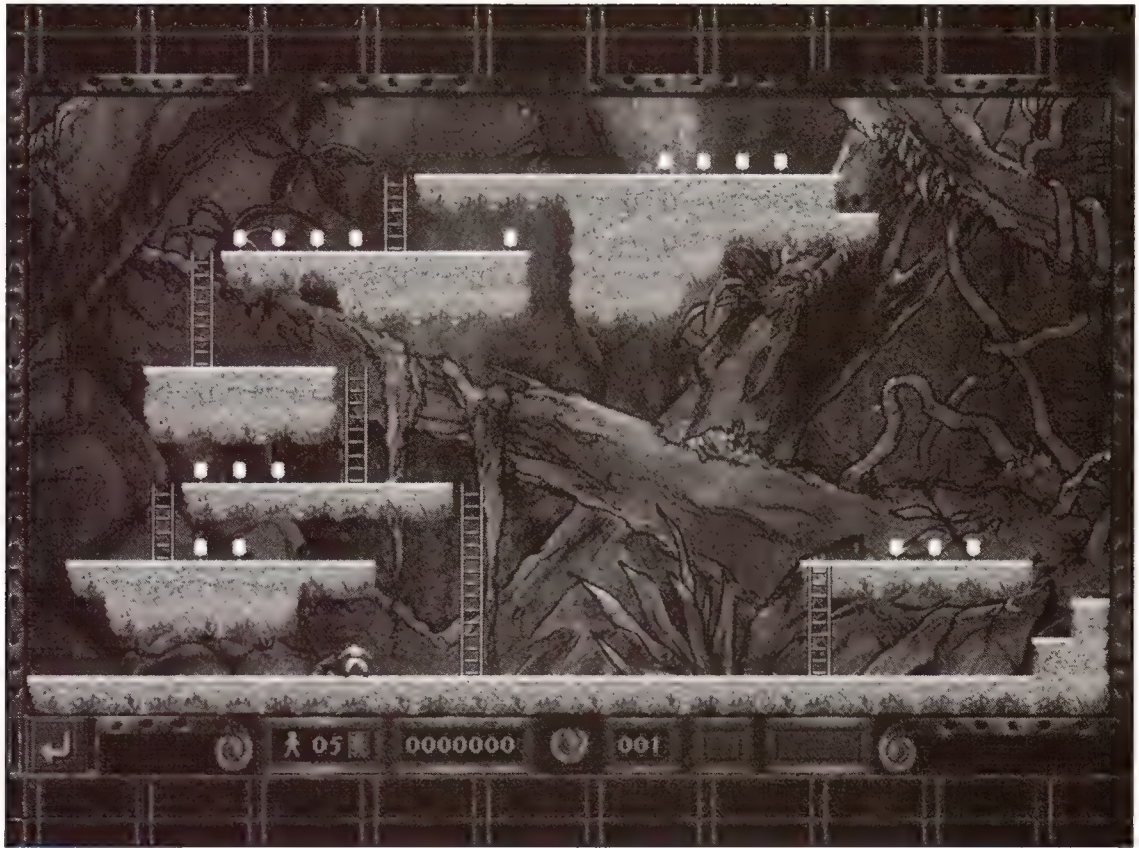
Key door: The skeleton keys fit inside these doors, which are also called vault doors or safe doors. A professional safecracker like myself could wax eloquent about the different kinds of key doors, but I won't.

-  **Rucksack:** At some point you'll ask the inevitable question, how does he fit all that gold in that tiny little rucksack? After all, the world's gold takes up a lot of space. So in addition to the laser blaster, Victor has supplied me with a special rucksack (also called knapsack or backpack) that never weighs more than 20 pounds (approximately 9 kilos) no matter how much gold I stuff into it. There's no limit to the sack's capacity. It has something to do with compression algorithms, but don't ask me—physics was never my specialty.
-  **Turf square:** The fundamental unit of measurement in the evil empire, a turf square is the area that holds one mad monk. When blasting or exploding, the turf tends to disappear in discrete squares.
-  **Holes:** Also called a pit, a hole is one turf square. A crater, or trench, measures at least two turf squares wide and holds at least two mad monks.

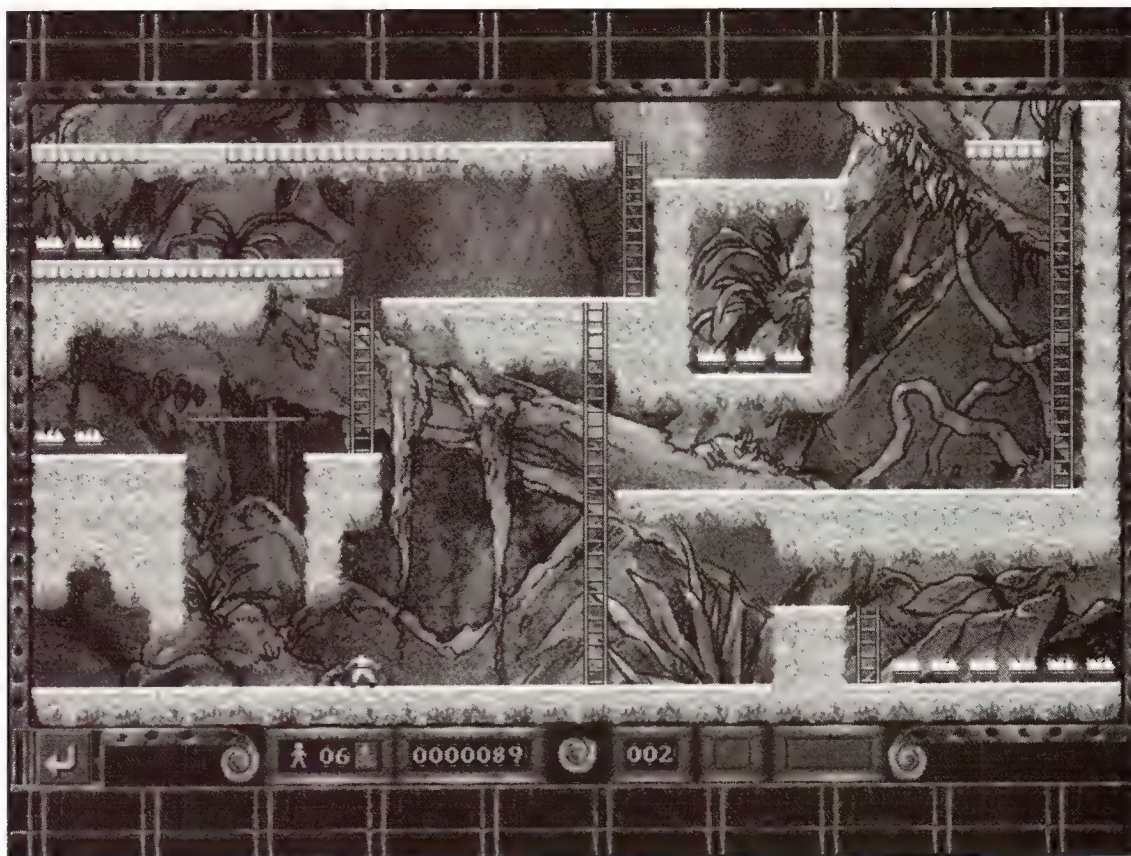
LEVEL 1

When I emerge from the portal, I land with a thud on the moss turf. The portal then vanishes overhead. From where I stand, I see the glint of gold in an easterly direction in a moss cavern filled with painter's ladders. The gold looks accessible enough, but I keep my guard up and my laser blaster handy.

1. I run eastward to the shorter painter's ladder and scale it quickly. The rungs are wet with moisture, as is true of all the ladders I use in the moss caverns, so I don special gloves for a fast grip to prevent falling. When I reach the top, I run immediately east and deposit each gold coin into my knapsack. At the end of the turf ledge, I turn around and see more gold coins on the distant turf ledges to the west, above my original standing place. I jump off the eastern-most edge, drop harmlessly to the cavern floor, and sprint west toward the taller painter's ladder.
2. I work my way up to the topmost ledge to avoid retracing my steps, thereby wasting time. So even though I see gold coins to my left and right as I climb upward, I don't begin depositing the gold in my

**LEVEL 1**

- knapsack until I reach the second highest ledge. I then run east and grab whatever's near at hand.
3. Now I'm ready to seize the remaining gold. I employ two methods for the gold sweep: either slide down the ladders or jump into a free fall. Later, I find that in some instances one approach turns out to be more advantageous than the other, but here I don't pay much mind as I sweep up the treasure on the lower ledges.
 4. As soon as I pick up the last gold coin, a gray exit door materializes at the top of a giant ladder that reaches the full height of the cavern. In haste, I quickly mount the ladder and disappear through the portal.



LEVEL 2

LEVEL 2

Some have asked me what it's like to pass through a time-space warp between caverns, expecting something like Disneyland. I've tried to remember, but I can't. They transport me instantaneously to the next level, and I guess I'm numb until I land on my solar plexus in the next cavern. In the second moss cavern, I gained an extra life. This will serve me well against the fearsome mad monks. But here I only hear the echo of my own breathing. Indeed, I'm alone to explore its intricacies.

1. I scale several ladders and run west across the top-most ledge. While my feet have grown accustomed to the soft padding of the turf, I come upon several sections of bedrock that, in a moment of flippancy, I learn was impervious to my laser blaster. I do, however, find short stretches of moss-growth that yield to the blast. I carve a

perfect hole for myself. Dropping down to the next level, I abscond with three treasure chests.

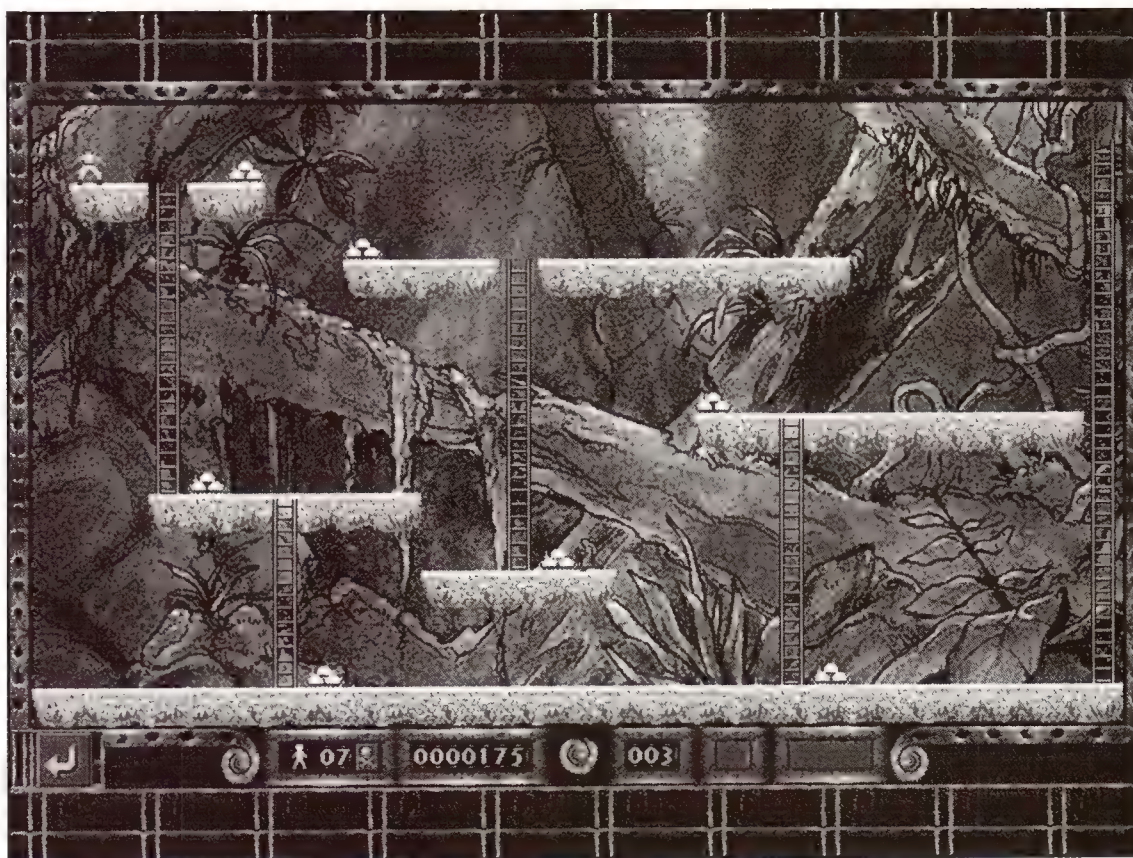
2. I run east along the bedrock ledge, jump down to a painter's ladder and slide down its length. To the west, I find my first hand-over-hand beam; it spans across a great chasm. Like a grunt in boot camp, I cross the divide and snatch up the two treasure chests there.
3. I re-cross the jungle beam, ascend the painter's ladder, then continue east to the second painter's ladder. Stepping east again, I stand on the roof of a moss chamber. Call it a sixth sense, but I just know it contains three treasure chests. I blast through the roof—and then free-fall into the chamber. After making a clean sweep in from one edge to the other, I then blast an escape hole in the floor of the moss chamber and drop below.

Gardening Tip

TIPS
TIPS
TIPS

The turf layer upon which I now stand presents an intriguing dilemma. It is doubly thick. A single blast won't reveal the treasure beneath. I'll have to make several. As a categorical rule, I blast the number of holes in a horizontal row corresponding to the levels of turf I need to get through. If I blast through four layers, then I blast four holes before jumping in; three layers, three holes, and so on. Once inside the hole, the horizontal blast number decreases by one, until I come to the last blast. I refer to these as descending series (e.g., 4-3-2-1, 3-2-1, 2-1, etc.).

4. The cavern floor lacks a step ladder on the other side of the moss tuft, so that rules out that route. But there is a way through the moss turf itself. In this descending series of two, I blast the first hole, back up, then blast the second hole. Jumping into a single hole would lead to my death: the walls of the hole would be too slippery for me to climb out again, and I would perish instantly in the clutches of the near-instant regrowth. But by using a special technique, I overcome this problem by making one blast, then stepping back and blasting a second time adjacent to it. By cutting a trench two blasts wide, I then fire a third blast to one side and slip through the hole. I collect the last of the treasure; then I hear the gray exit door manifest overhead and rush for it.



LEVEL 3

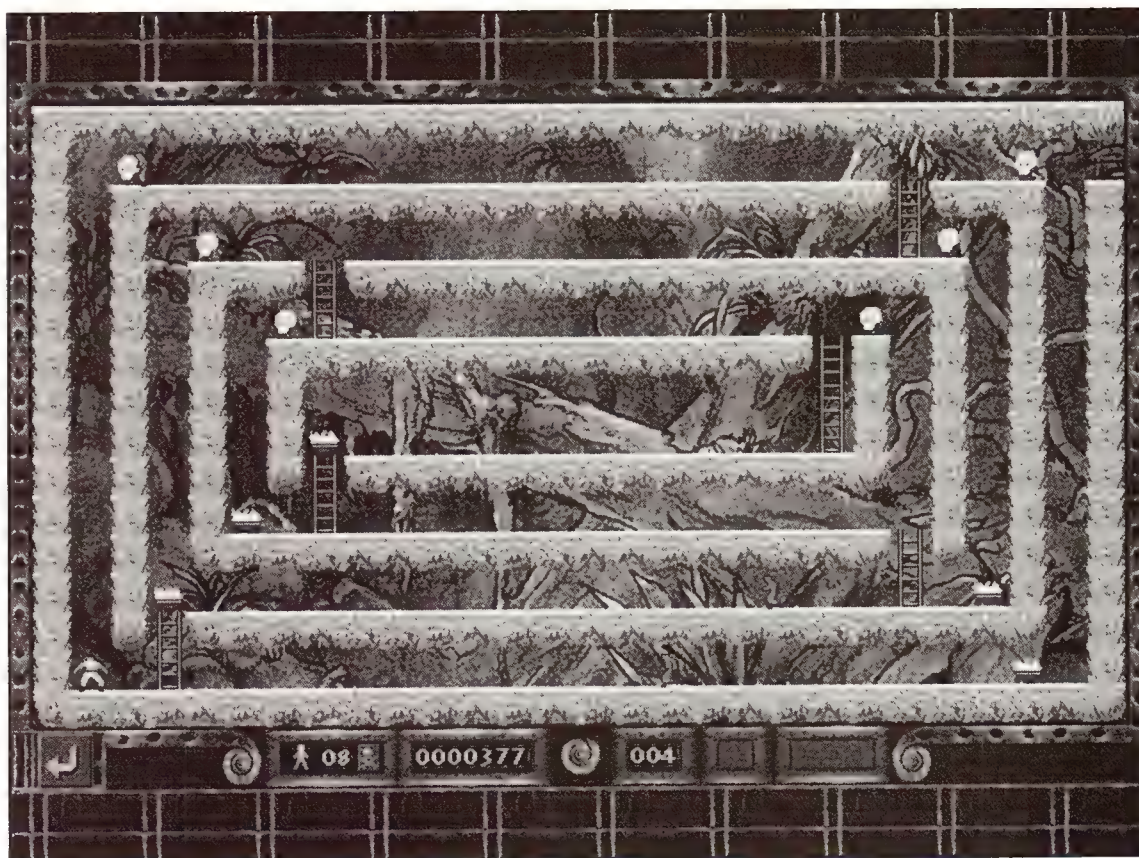
LEVEL 3

Stealing the gold bars from this moss cavern presents a new challenge. Just as I think this job will be easy, I encounter my first mad monk. These dull-witted drones are bred to pummel all intruders—no questions asked. Some are more intelligent than others; some remind me of the *Keystone Kops*. But they're all vicious. At no point am I actually capable of killing off the monks. Like the renewable turf, the monks can reappear through a separate portal whenever they fail to escape my traps in time. So except for the smallest interval, in the lapse between death and rebirth, two monks constantly chase after me. That means I am always on the lookout for the fresh presence of a replacement monk. They like to stick treasure into their pockets. I noticed their pockets need darning . . . for they frequently drop gold in the darndest of places!

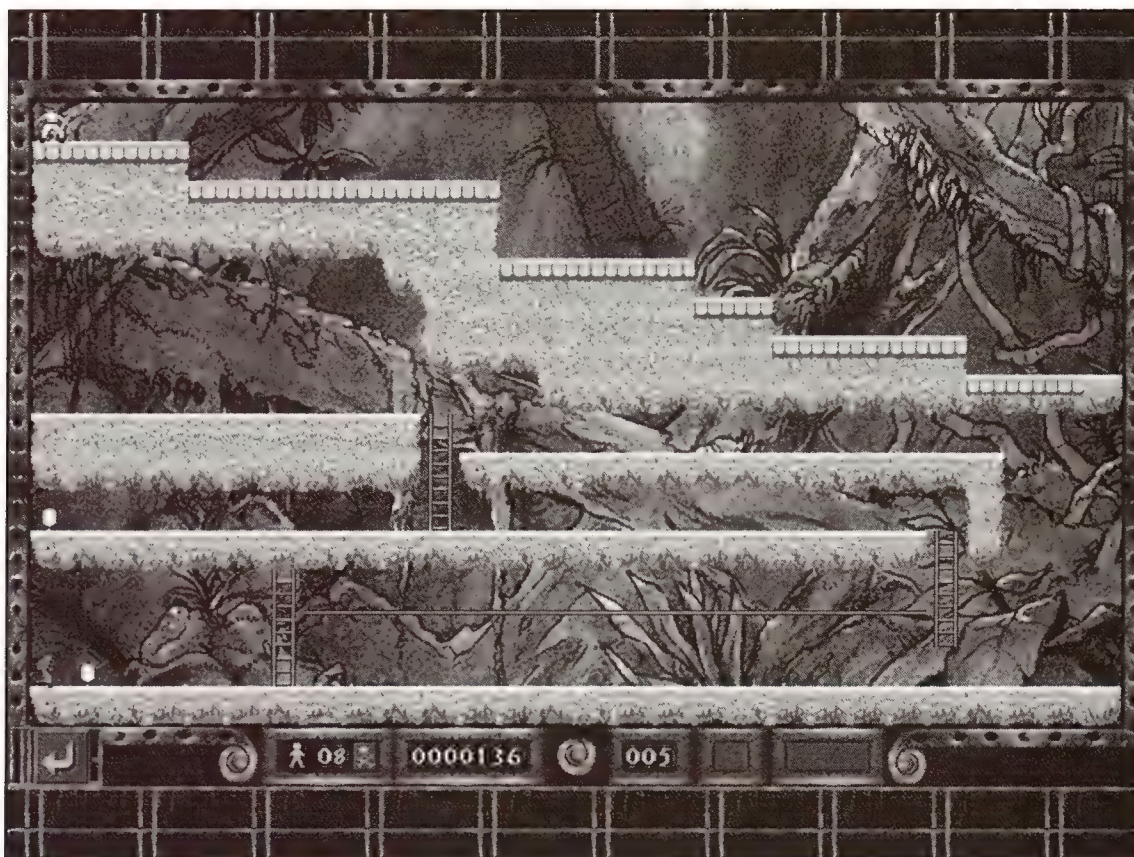
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1. I begin my mission in the northwest corner, standing on a T-shaped ledge with a ladder forming the stem of the “T”. After dumping the gold ingots into my rucksack, I descend the upper western ladder like a firefighter slipping down the fire pole. I then clean up the gold piles on the second turf ledge and slide down the lower western ladder to the cavern floor.
 2. Within seconds of reaching the bottom, my crimson-coated adversary discovers me, but I have finesse on my side. Before he can drop to the same level, I grab the treasure by the base of the lower western ladder and sprint for the eastern ladder, where I grab the second batch of gold. Then I scale up to the second turf ledge, and drop even more loot into my knapsack. But to nab the gold on the middle tiers, I must cross back westward via the cavern floor. With violence in his lurid red eyes, my monk friend drops before me. Undaunted, I brandish my laser pistol and blast a clean pit between us. The stupid fellow falls sidelong into the cavity as I dash overhead and make for the previous ladder.
 3. With him hot on my tail, I scurry up the ladder, run eastward, and free-fall to the middle turf tier. There I waste no time picking up the stack of gold bars. I then rush up the ladder to the top middle tier whilst my befuddled antagonist climbs up the wrong ladder. As I make my successful play for the last of the stash, the gray exit door magically appears at the top of the long ladder. Whistling a few bars of my favorite Zep tune, I mount this stairway to heaven.

LEVEL 4

In my line of work, you must always prepare for the unexpected. There’s very little you could call routine. Hence, I’m a bit surprised when I emerge from the portal in a sudden free fall. Give me at least a little preparation. To make matters worse, I face not one but three mad monks in a moss-turf labyrinth. My pulse quickens. I know I can count on my superior intelligence and reliable laser blaster by my side, but I can’t afford a moment’s hesitation if I expect to make it out of this cavern alive.

**LEVEL 4**

1. Instead of landing with a wet thud on the moss foundation, I land with a crisp clink on a treasure chest. There are more of them on the bottom half; golden skulls clutter the top half. I immediately spot a painter's ladder less than a few yards away and climb up to the next level. Two objects then come into view: a mad monk bearing down on me like a locomotive, and just over his shoulder, a ladder that leads to the tier overhead. One promises salvation, the other damnation, or at least certain pain. Without hesitation, I point my laser pistol at the narrowing gap between us and hollow out a pit. As I expect, my fierce friend lets his fury get the better of him, falling sideways into the hole. While he pauses in bewilderment, I hop over his head and truck east for the ladder.
2. I zigzag up the next several tiers, leaving my three enemies in the moss dust. At one point, I turn around to blast a crater behind me—just a security measure to stall my pursuer. After nailing the last treasure chest, I ransack the region of its golden deathheads.



LEVEL 5

3. The higher I rise in this vertical maze and the greater the distance between me and my evil brothers, the more confident I become. I turn west to snatch a golden skull on the outer edge, but then decide that safety dictates I double back to free-fall over the western edge. I still have one golden item left at the southeastern portion of the cavern. Wind whistling by my ears, I land on the last bit of treasure, triggering in turn the appearance of the gray portal. Their shrieks of frustration fuel my satisfaction; once again I march up the ladder to freedom.

LEVEL 5

When I appear in the next moss cavern, the fifth in my adventures, I prepare myself for an encounter with four or five red-robed demons. After all, I have just suffered a harrowing experience with three such guards of subterranean darkness in the previous cavern. But as a famous thief

once foretold, an adventure isn't an adventure without a few surprises. Peering down the giant bedrock steps, I see no sign of treasure nor the fiends who guard it. But the squeaky footsteps of a lone monk betrays his presence beneath me. I know I mustn't fall into the mental pit of complacency. Instead, I plan to trap the luckless devil.

1. All begins smoothly enough. At the base of the colossal steps, I find a patch of moss turf just broad enough for me to slip through. I fire off a laser round at the regenerative patch and find a hidden gold coin. With a fat grin on my face, the coin falls into my grasp and then into my backpack.
2. Once I land, the two lurid eyes of the monk-fiend train on me like the twin barrels of a shotgun. With no time to spare, I swiftly fire off a round into the moss-turf before he has time to reverse direction, falling into the hole. I hop over his head and sprint for the gold coin in the southwest corner. Pursued from behind, I scale the painter's ladder, traversing the monk's head on the parallel beam.
3. The stretch of remaining turf requires speed and little more. My legs churn like pistons as I dash to the far end of the tier, capture the gold token, double back a few steps to scale the ladder, and then take a running diving leap for the gray exit door. The duped monk howls with rage.

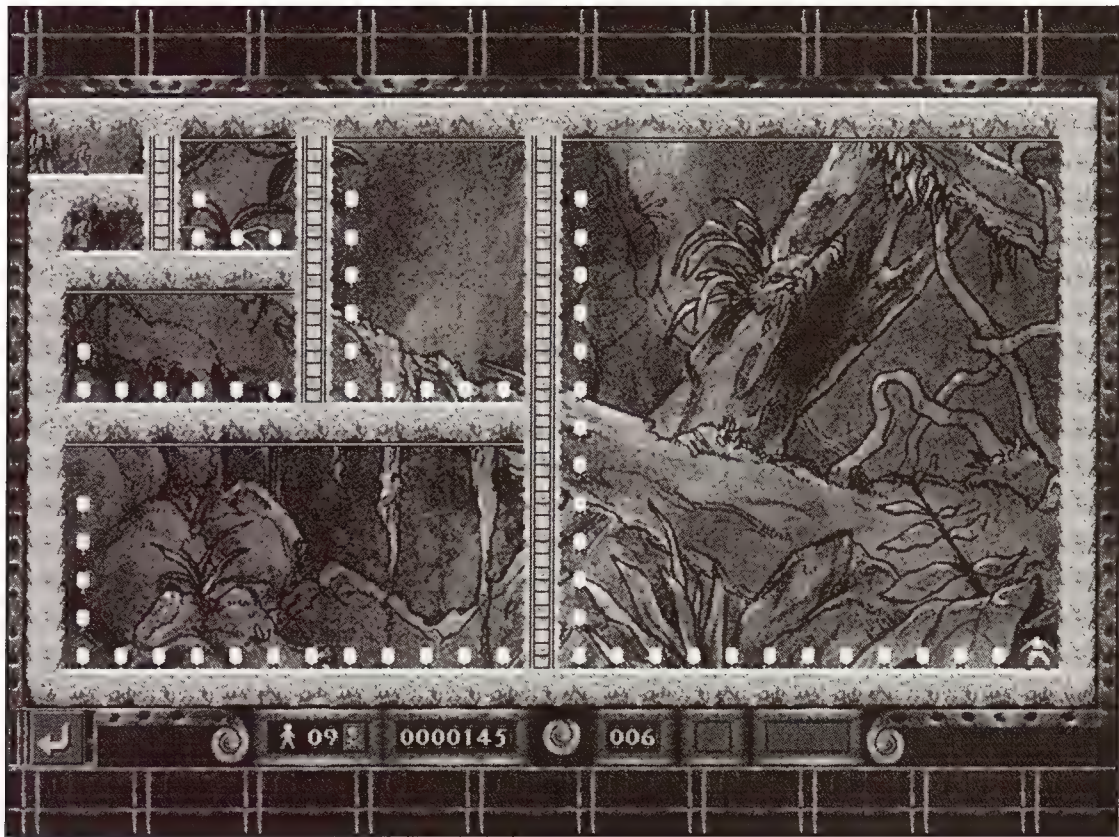
LEVEL 6

The next cavern proves more intricate than the previous one, fraught with more hand-over-hand bars and ladders. The two monks begin with the advantage from the top elevation, while I start from the cavern floor. Despite my disadvantage, I can outwit the witless monks for exceptional profit. More than in any of the previous levels, here my success depends more on timing and finesse, especially in the laying of traps.

Yellow Alert

CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTION

During this particular maneuver, one of the monks coughs up a ruble; it hangs ripe for the plucking. Monks sometimes seize gold for the sole purpose of making my job that much harder. I could clean out a sector of the screen, thinking I could move onto the next—only to discover



LEVEL 6

CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTION

that I'd have to retrace my steps to retrieve the stranded gold piece. I hate retracing my steps; still, I must be a good shepherd to make it into the next cavern with my golden flock intact.

1. Like harvesting wheat with a thresher, I scoop up the gold coins that line the mossy furrow between me and the center long ladder. By some mysterious physical property, a strand of gold coins hangs to the east of the ladder—defying Newtonian mechanics (or is it quantum physics?). While climbing the long ladder, I suppress the urge to pluck them from the invisible vine and instead cross the jungle beam on a western course. Alerted, the dull-witted twins follow close on my heels.
2. Like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, I lead these unlucky vermin to the lower western quadrant, then drop to the extreme west end where I harvest some golden coins, then stop short. Before reaching the ladder, I fire two quick blasts into the turf and wait for the rats in red

habits to fall into my booby trap (don't these fellows ever learn?). I then skip over their heads to the long ladder and begin my ascent. In typical bewilderment, one of the two chases after phantoms.

3. Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee follow me up the ladder for my second ascent, but this time I have a new trap in store for them. I climb toward the top of the ladder until I am belly to belly with the uppermost coin. There I wait for the lead monk to come within a few rungs of my feet, hoping that one of them might step on the hem of his skirt and topple down. Since that doesn't happen, I manage to whistle a few bars of "O, Suzanna!" before my nefarious friend reaches out a clawed hand for my soul. At the last possible instant, I swing outward and hold open the fly of my pants as the British pounds clank against my crotch, then manage a polite wave as the monks look on in frozen stupefaction.

Red Alert

CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTION

Mad monks never die; they just fade away. They also fade in, and I can never be sure where, exactly. The portals always materialize out of thin air, ejecting the monk into a free fall. In this moss cavern, a stricken monk might reappear either to the right or to the left of the ladder. If to the right, it's usually much easier to time the double blast; if to the left, then it becomes more of a challenge as one monk attempts to climb out of the ditch before the other falls in. Whenever the latter happens, I make sure I keep enough space behind me so that I can back up and blast additional pits if need be. This also has an inherent risk: the more holes I blast, the longer I must wait for the unoccupied holes to fill in again. The sooner I fire a blast, the greater the likelihood that it would trap the monk.

4. Perhaps they're smarter than I thought. Taking no chances, I step back and fire the requisite two blasts into the turf, forming a grave for two. My hapless foes fall in, and I scamper overhead and begin my third ascent up the long ladder.
5. At this point, it gets trickier as I rely on all my cunning to outwit the monastic menace. I have two of them practically breathing down my

neck. I stop off at the midway point and head west, pocketing the change lying on the turf there. I scale the painter's ladder to the hand-over-hand bar, traverse west to the edge of the small moss chamber, then drop into a free fall to pick up the extra gold coins.

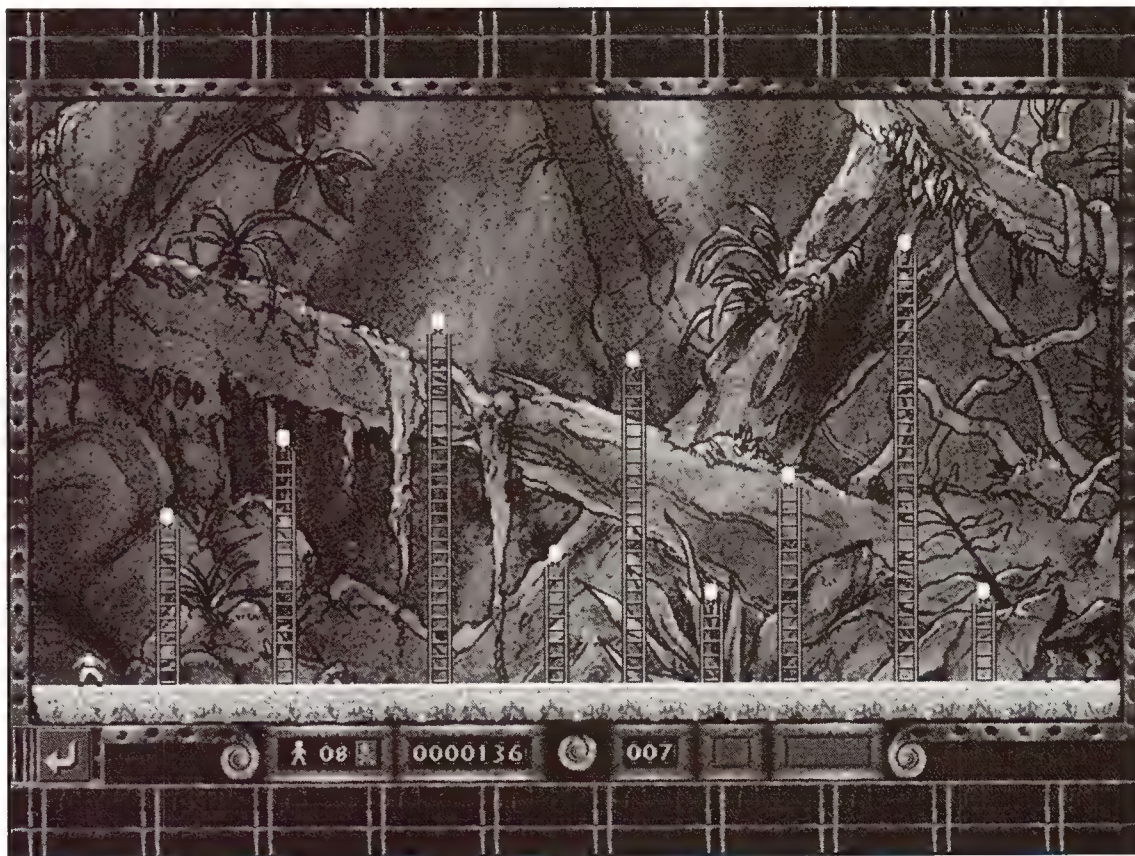
6. I encounter a big problem at this point; two monks sprint toward me and no time to lose. I quickly fire off a blast to stall one of them, giving me enough time to climb the ladder. At first, I think I have enough time to make it up to the northwest quadrant of the cavern, but these guys prove persistent. Instead, I scale the upper ladder all the way to the top and head east until I'm halfway across. If you watch baseball, then you know what it's like being in a pickle. In any case, I'm surrounded. Hoping that my blaster won't fail me now, I create a nice hole through the thin turf and jump through to the jungle beam below.

Gardening Tip

TIPS TIPS TIPS

I discover something interesting in the sixth moss cavern that applies to all types of turf in the evil empire. Whenever there's a single layer of turf, be it moss or otherwise, and there's empty space below, a pit to trap a monk becomes an escape hatch for me. I suppose Nature saw fit to give me this advantage to balance the red monk's ability to climb out of a blasthole. An easy way to lure a monk into a trap (other than standing on the other side), is to jump through it first—provided that it's safe to do so!

7. One of the monks gets trapped in the hole that I pass through; the other rounds the end of the turf ledge, approaching me as I hang there. I drop down to the floor of the cavern, trap one monk, and then proceed up to the gray exit door in the northwest corner.



LEVEL 7

LEVEL 7

This so-called moss cavern is almost a contradiction in terms. Instead of turf ledges and tiers, I find only painter's ladders of varying heights and two long ladders sprouting forth from the moist turf foundation. Golden coins hang from the head of each ladder. I could trap the monks beneath me, but eluding them overhead would require a different tactic altogether. I begin on the west side of the cavern, my twin adversaries on the east. Between us, the ladders rise upwards like a row of trees.

1. The contest begins simply enough. I climb the first two painter's ladders, seize the lucre, and free-fall each time. But as I mount the western long ladder, I remember a trick I learned in the previous level. This time, I'll lure one of the monks up the long ladder; at the last moment, I'll then jump sideways to the east and drift downwards to the cavern floor. Meanwhile, the other monk falls into a confused state as he teeter-totters on the top rungs of a painter's ladder.

-
2. After falling down to the cavern floor, I realize that if I'm not careful, I'll find myself in a pickle. I must retrieve the gold coin on the painter's ladder, but before doing so, I fire a single blast directly behind me to foil the monk west of me. I then turn and quickly ascend the ladder. The monk to the east pursues me up the ladder, so I grab the gold coin and jump sideways to the east.

Gardening Tip

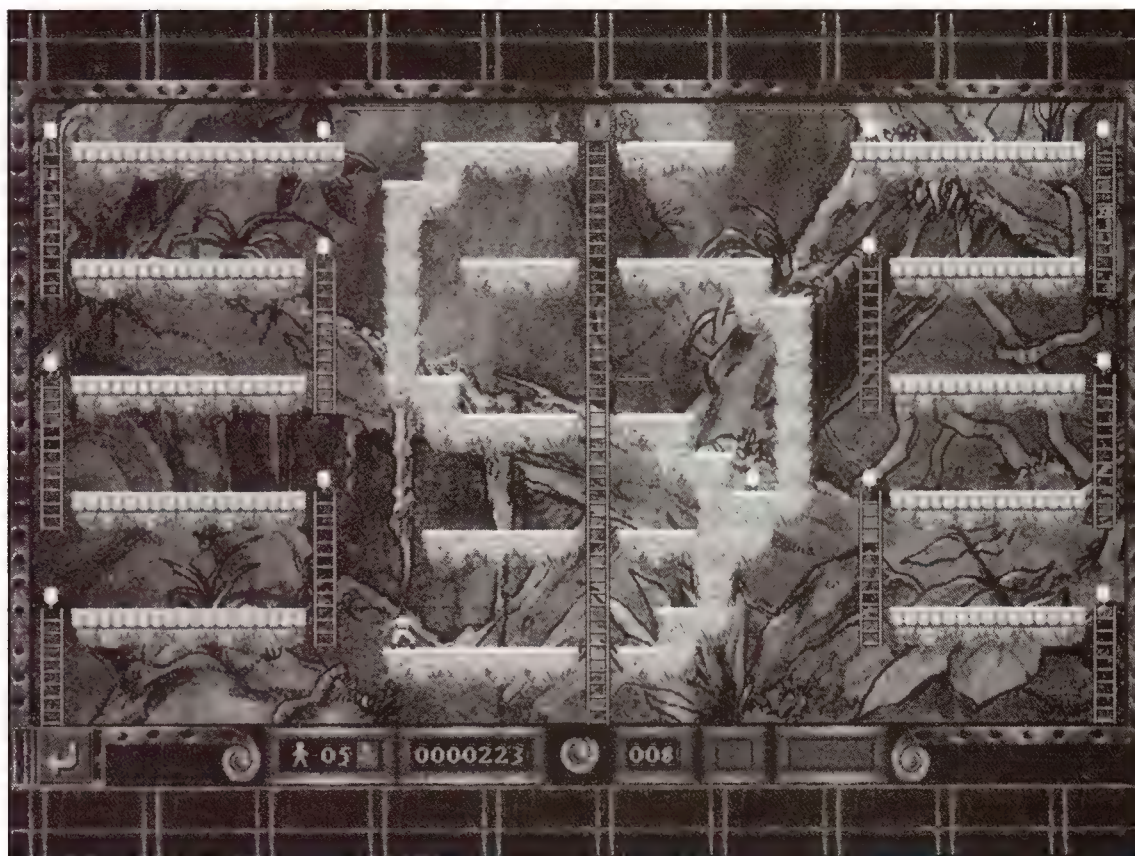
TIPS TIPS TIPS

In some instances, the monks won't come down from their ladders, preferring to see-saw up and down. In such cases the laser blast proves unnecessary, and I can continue my collections off the top rungs of the other ladders. If I stay at the top of the ladder, so do the monks. If I touch the cavern floor, they immediately descend. So I can keep them up on the ladders where I want them by minimizing the time I spend on the ground.

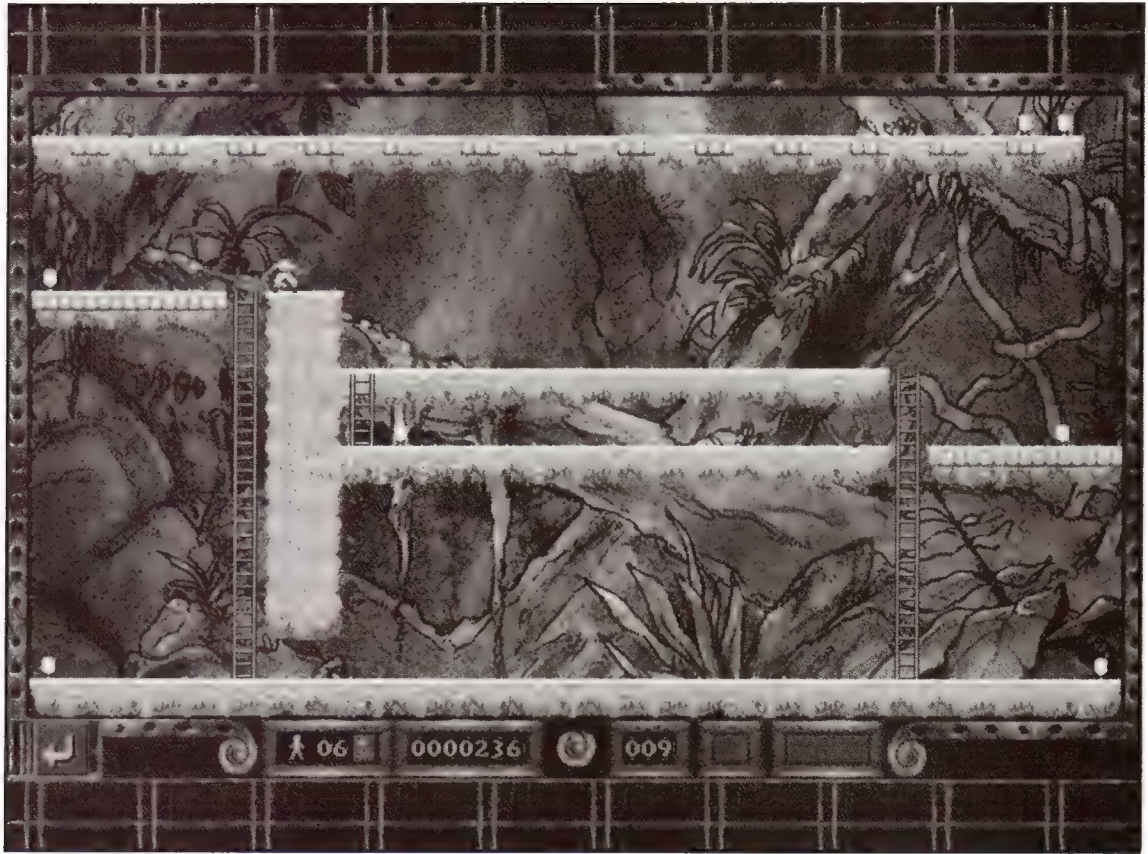
3. I sprint with all my might for the remaining ladders until I retrieve the last gold coin. I expect the gray exit door to materialize, but I am greeted instead by a disturbing quiet. I hear the moist paddings of two monks ready to pummel me senseless. One of them must have swiped a gold token. By trapping him in the pit, I can force him to cough up the goods. When I trap the lead monk, he hurls the gold nugget into the air. I catch it in the palm of my hand as I hop overhead. The gray exit door appears, but the second monk obviously intends to halt my progress. Reacting quickly, I blast another pit in front of him and bolt to the exit.

LEVEL 8

When I come to the eighth cavern, its complexity impresses me. It consists of three sections: two bedrock switchbacks with painter's ladders of equal length and a center moss chamber with a long ladder up the middle. I note the two monks at the apex of the cavern, and I also spot a key. Between the two monks stands a red key door. After sweeping the region of its stolen treasure, I must use the key to escape through the key door. This feature, coupled with the single gold coin placed in a challenging, death-defying corner, makes this the most difficult cavern so far.

**LEVEL 8**

1. The key to making it out of this cavern with all the loot is a fundamental strategy that's fast becoming a favorite of mine: baiting. I guess in this case I can call it red-baiting. My plan: luring the monks down to the lower level, keeping them as close as possible without posing a threat to myself. I then proceed to the eastern switchback and begin my ascent, waiting at intervals for the red brothers to catch up. I note that if I lag too long on the ladder, they reverse course, heading toward the central moss cavern. But once I step up to the next level, they resume their pursuit.
2. I continue to lay my trap by climbing steadily up the switchback, careful not to get too far ahead as I collect the gold tokens along my path. As I approach the top, I sprint for the eastern hand-over-hand bar. I hang over a moss ledge, then release my grip and drop down.
3. Snatching the key poses no great challenge, although now is the time to take it since I won't be coming by this way again. While the monks spin in circles, I plot to snare the single gold franc sitting at

**LEVEL 9**

the bottom of a mossy niche. This will require a three-stage strategy. First, I stand beneath the short parallel beam and fire a single blast at the adjacent turf. I then drop to that level and repeat the shot at the turf square beside the gold franc. Since it's now safe to drop to the coin's level, I do so, grabbing it and tossing it into the rucksack. Turning, I then fire west to make an escape hole.

4. The worst is now over. I continue my journey up the western switchback, dutifully sweeping the area clean of booty. The monks have no clue where I am, so I proceed unimpeded to the red vault door. I unlock it, and dive onwards.

LEVEL 9

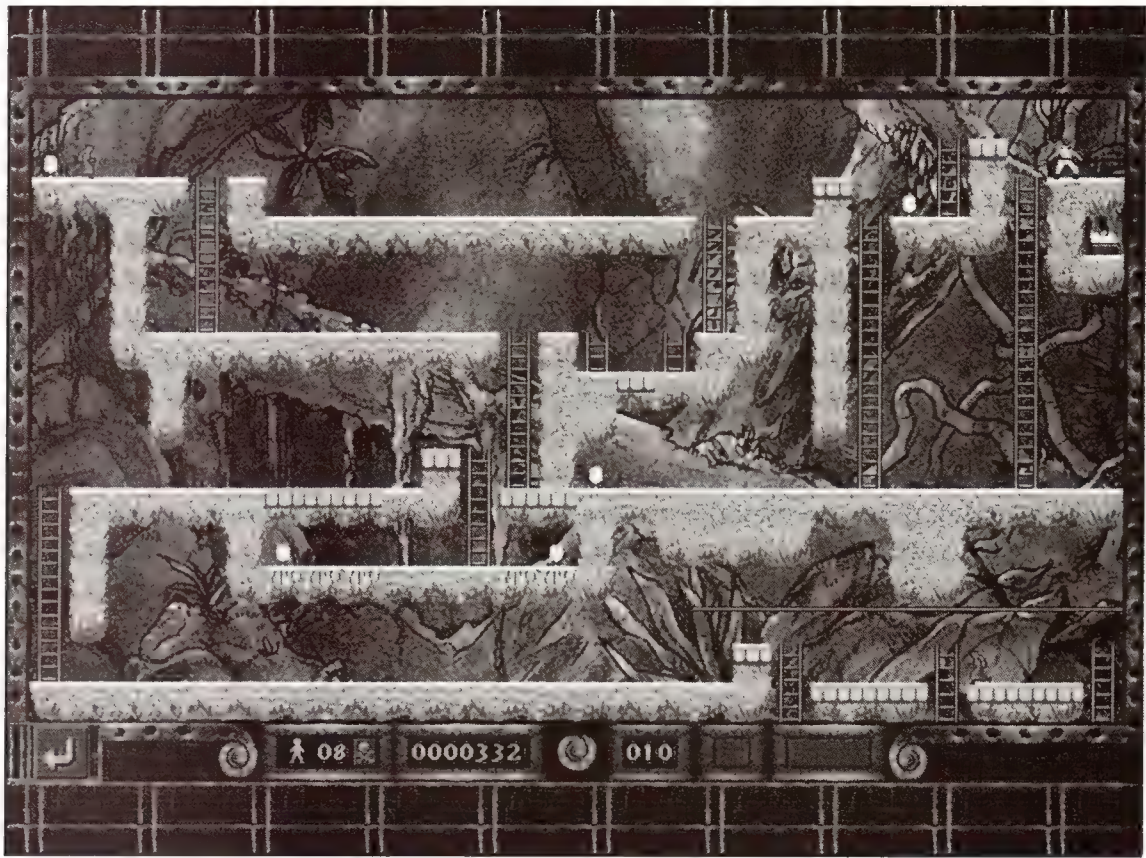
Setting foot in the ninth cavern, I spot a frustrating barrier in the architecture. A great, cobblestoned turf tier spans overhead with two gold coins at the end. Unfortunately, I can't ascend to that level directly

because there's no ladder. The other gold ingots present no special problem, but if I am to remain the good gold shepherd, I must herd those two pieces from the monks in what would prove the strangest alliance ever imagined.

1. The most obvious first move: snatching the coin adjacent to me. I make this move, then cross east to the moss tuning fork below. From my experience in the previous caverns, I know that the monks can't fall all the way through a single layer of moss. But I can. I draw the monks into the moss graves, trying to extinguish their lives. This way they'll reincarnate on the top level and, eventually, pick up a gold piece on the way down. I find the upper edge of the tuning fork useful for trapping both monks; if I'm ever in a tight spot, I can always blast down to the lower level and lure one of them into the pit. Since they're aggressive and quick, I think it best to create craters.
2. After entrapment, there's no guarantee a monk will bring the coin down with him. So I must ensnare them repeatedly until both coins are mine. While waiting, I also drop to the cavern floor and snatch up the gold coins at both ends.
3. Once I retrieve all the coins, I face an entirely different problem. I can't trap the monks any more; a newly materialized ladder now leads up to the topmost ledge. On the west side of the ledge stands the gray exit door. So instead of snuffing them out in the turf, I revert to a tried and true strategy: I bait them. After all, in a straight sprint I always win. It is possible to trap the monks above but it's risky, since there are too few turf squares in-between the bedrock blocks. I can save myself a lot of headaches, then, by halting the entrapment strategy at the exact moment when the heavenly long ladder materializes.

LEVEL 10

At first glance, the tenth cavern looks familiar enough. It boasts the proper proportion of ladders and moss turf tiers and chambers; from my starting point in the northeast corner, I can hear the two twins who seem to follow me everywhere now. Whether or not they actually are the same two I can't be sure, but nonetheless this simplifies my tactics. Still, as I am about to discover, there are a few surprises on this level.



LEVEL 10

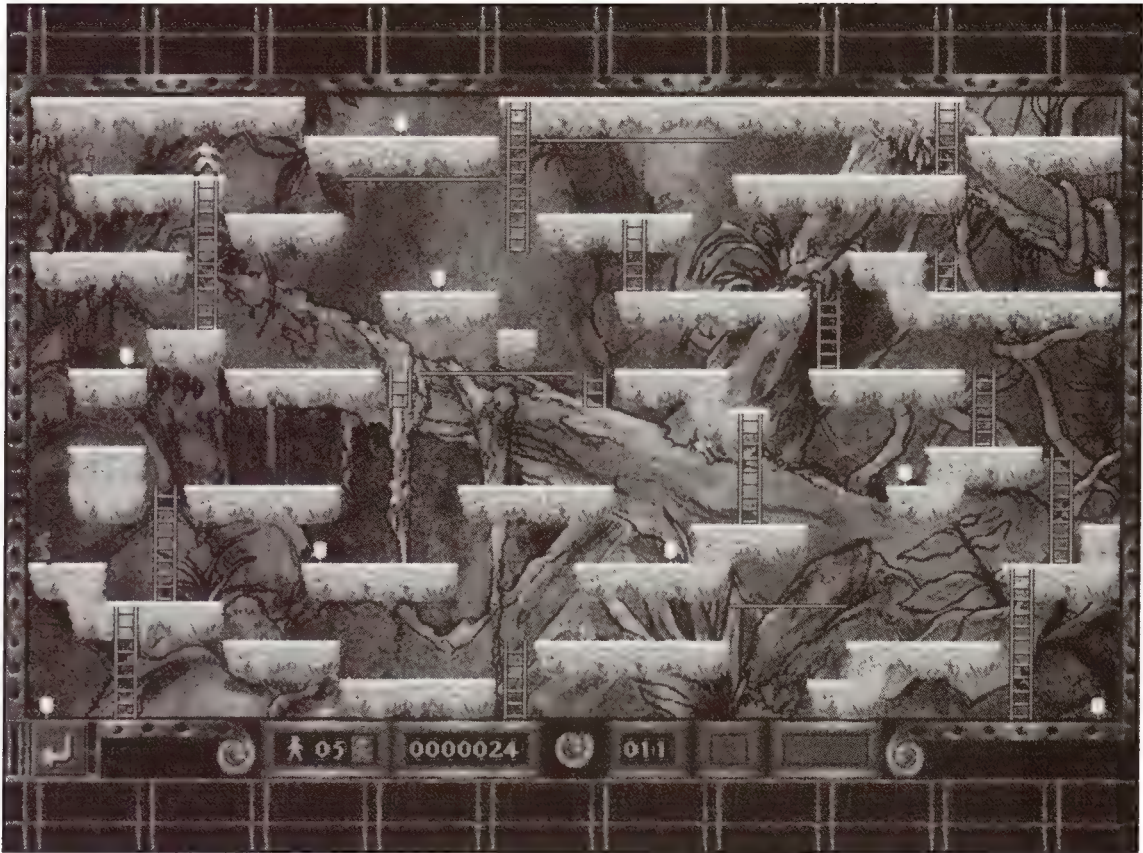
1. Blasting through the roof of the small moss chamber to the east, I sail downward through trapdoor turf with my bag ready for treasure. With a flash, I suffer the horrifying realization that I have stumbled into an inescapable trap, since the chamber is only as wide as my shoulders. But the floor of the chamber, while sturdy enough to support a treasure chest, turns out to be very porous, as is the moss ledge right below it. So I end up dropping all the way to the bottom of the cavern.
2. I break my fall by gripping the parallel beam. A short ladder stands erect just below my dangling feet. A malevolent monk to my west rapidly approaches. He doesn't seem in a conversational frame of mind, so I quickly drop to the ladder and wait for him to approach by foot. Then, at the last possible instant, I spring up the ladder and traverse the hand-over-hand bar west, leaving him far behind.

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3. I bolt to the southwestern corner of the cavern, confident that I have left the monk well behind. I scale the ladder and proceed east across the stone blocks until I can go no farther. Without a ladder, there's no way for me to climb up the moss hedge. I step back and fire into the turf, then drop down into the turf below. I have no time to prepare for this, my second surprise. Tar turf slows down my progress as well as the monk's. My reflexes primed, I fire into the turf just in time to entrap the monk and grope for the coin. The thick resin resists laser blasts, so I must hurry back and dash over the head of the monk before he lifts himself out of the hole. Just as my feet hit the other patch of resin, the slow-witted monk falls into the pit a second time. So it isn't necessary to blast another hole. Thoroughly befuddled, the monk doesn't realize what had happened until I am well beyond his fatal grasp.
 4. I have now overcome the worst of my obstacles. Charging up the ladder, I snatch up the gold coin in the northwest corner of the cavern, then scurry across about two thirds of the upper tier. A single blast in the roof of the moss chamber allows me to drift down to pick up a coin just to the west. I finish my exploration of the tenth cavern by scaling the ladder and pilfering the last gold coin. Conveniently, the gray exit door's right overhead.

LEVEL 11

Most people don't know this, but before I turned to thieving full-time I taught high school geometry. Though I had enjoyed this distinguished, if rather square, career as a mathematician, I finally left the profession because of the poor compensation. As other teachers will no doubt agree, it's hard to support a jet-setting lifestyle on a high-school teacher's salary. Sometimes I felt my life was merely going in circles.

I bring this up because without my finely attuned sense for geometry, I would not have the vaguest notion how to clean this cavernous vault. For even though the eleventh cavern doesn't hold surprises like trap-door turf and turf tar, it does feature a different layout entirely. At first glance, it appears to have a random assortment of moss ledges and painter's ladders. But in this case, the randomness is an optical illusion.

**LEVEL 11**

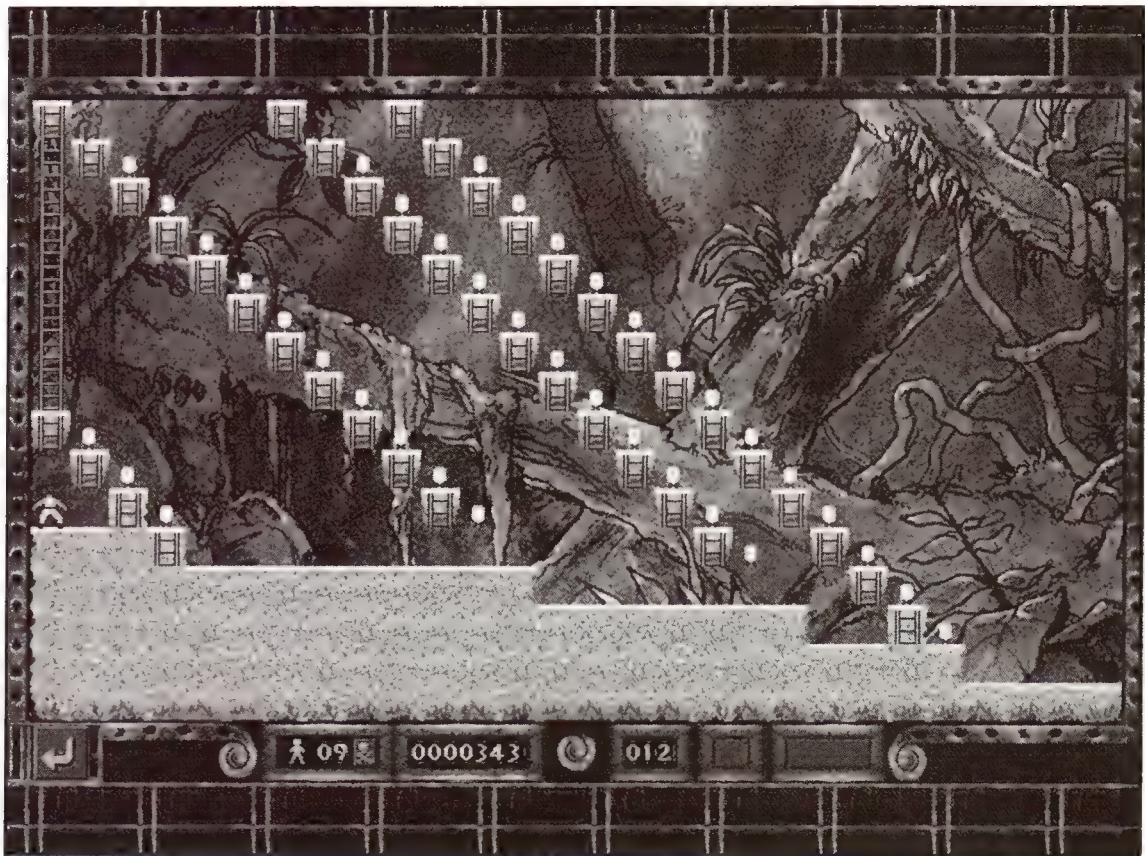
Diagonal boundaries set off three regions. If you slant a parallelogram in the same direction as the backslash key on your computer keyboard, you'll begin to understand the foundation of my strategy. Once again, I feel like I'm going in circles.

1. Crossing east on the jungle beam with two mad monks close behind, I climb the ladder to a moss ledge that has sunk down a notch. I snatch the gold coin and blast an escape hole. Before jumping through it, however, I have to wait for the red rear guard to ascend the ladder. Baiting the monks, I plunge through the narrow gap at the last possible moment. I land on the jungle beam, then quickly release, falling into the heart of the middle section below.
2. Feeling a fresh adrenaline rush, I skip down the diagonal axis of the moss steps. I have a few narrow encounters with the monks but

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make it down to the bottom of the decline. I take another gold coin, then turn 180 degrees and jump off the ledge to the level below. I now stand near the floor in the southeastern section of the moss cavern.

3. To maintain a solid lead, I rush east across the hand-over-hand bar, on the other side of which is a moss ledge and then a painter's ladder. I jump sideways to the east and palm the gold coin in the southeast corner. According to my geometric model, I've left the central parallelogram and entered the northeast sector, an irregular quadrilateral. I scamper up the series of painter's ladders and turf ledges, ignoring for now the gold coin that lies at the diagonal boundary along both sections. I'll retrieve it later. For now, I seek the northeast corner.
4. With the monks a comfortable distance behind, I climb to the northeast corner, a moss ledge exactly level with the first. With my laser blaster engaged, I fire into the turf and descend through the hole to the gold coin directly below. At this point, I wait. The monks have sniffed out my trail and are almost level with me on the other side of the turf divide. By now, I've learned how to predict their behavior. By teasing them up here, I force all three to bunch up on a short painter's ladder. When they become frozen in confusion, and I become confident that their threat has been reduced, I blast an escape hole and hurry down several ledges to retrieve the gold coin I left behind earlier. Once again, I drop down to the bottom of the cavern and wait until all three monks came within spitting distance. By getting them single file like this, I eliminate the possibility of being surrounded, and since I'm faster on my feet, I easily lose them as I run up the moss-ledge stairs a second time.
5. Perhaps an outsider might think that I've been merely running in circles at this point, but now I'm free to remove the remaining gold coins without the nuisance of the three monks in this cavern. Ascending these stairs again offered me the only chance for moving now to the third and last sector, the one that occupies the southwest corner of the cavern. I cross west over the jungle beam and wend my way down to the first of the last three coins. It falls easily into my grasp.



LEVEL 12

6. Safely out of the clutches of the monks, reclaiming the two remaining gold coins requires little planning. On the bottom level, I have to blast a passage through the turf. The monk-hounds, meanwhile, have been completely thrown off my scent. When the gray exit door materializes, they try their best to intercept me, but with superior speed, I get there first.

LEVEL 12

Surely, this has to be the most unnatural looking cavern in the moss series that I've encountered thus far, or at least a close tie with the ladder cavern. It's another study in diagonals of the backslash variety, although this time it suffers from a complete lack of moss terrain. For obvious reasons, I nickname it the step cavern. But as I soon find out, its spare features severely limit my range of movement.

CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTION**Red Alert**

On this level, I have to be especially careful of monks raining down from random places. Just when I think I have a comfortable lead, one might suddenly emerge from above and pounce on me like a jaguar. A repeated action on my part, such as ascending a turf stair from a fixed point several times, does not guarantee that they will repeat the same behavior. But I observe that waiting often persuades the monks to drop to the cavern floor. Turf entrapment as a delaying tactic also helps, but it also perpetuates the red rain problem. On this level, I find that it's better to slow down their progress than to crush them in the turf trash compactors.

1. The cavern floor consists of five broad steps of pure moss—each of varying length—that reach their lowest points in the southeastern corner. Three staircases hang overhead, the first bordered by a ladder that makes it appear roughly like a triangle. I run east down three of the large steps, turn around on the third terrace to carve a trench four blasts wide, then run down to the fourth moss block. The trench delays them just long enough to give me a comfortable lead. I don't make the mistake of stranding myself on the fifth terrace, for it's a dead end.
2. Ladders have been conveniently placed on each of the steps, so I ascend the incline to the top of the third staircase, collecting gold coins with each step. Once at the top, I jump west, land on the middle staircase, and then sprint down the steps, making room in my rucksack for every golden peso. By the time I pop down to the bottom, I've already vacated two-thirds of the cavern's loot. At one point, a red monk lowers himself from the third staircase to the middle one, where I am, but I find that by using his head as a step, I can hop over to the outer steps. As in the previous cavern, it becomes necessary at times to make a loop just to evade the red monks.
3. Once I finish the mint-sweep of the outer two stairs, I have to make my way back to the first one. To do this, I loop around to the outer steps, the only group that touches the moss firmament, and then crab-walk until I stand above the second step of the cavern floor. Climbing the long ladder that borders the west seems the most efficient way to collect the last gold coins. I still have to

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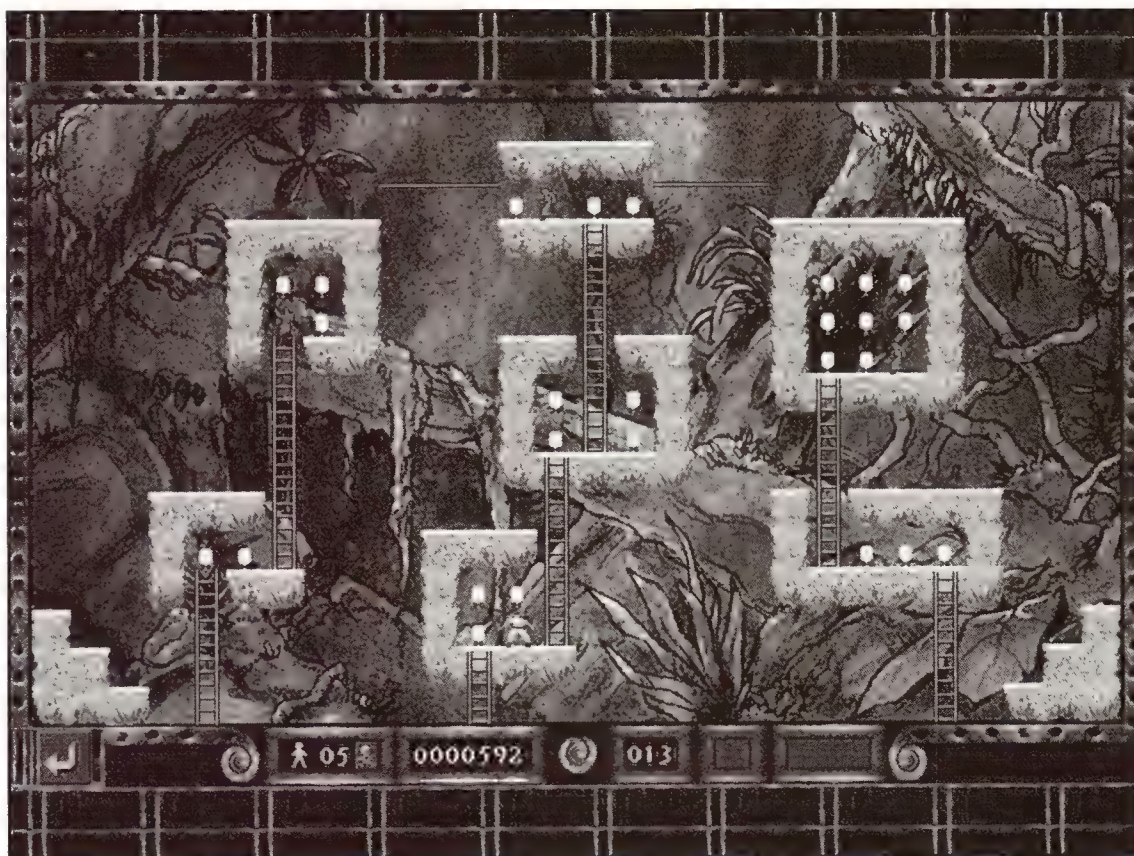
dispense with one monk, but a simple trap takes care of him. And by the time I scale the whole length of the ladder, I finish the task in relative safety. I trip down the first set of stairs whistling “We’re in the Money.”

4. I have one major snag before departing this cavern: what to do with the last menacing monk. Apparently, he’d gotten stuck on the fifth terrace, and when the heavenly vault appeared, he got the wise idea of climbing up the stairs. As soon as I touch down, he makes a rapid descent with obvious evil intent. I assume he has a little more than a chat in mind, so I discharge a single laser blast and send him spiraling into a turf-pit. I blow the smoke from the barrel of my laser pistol, shove it back into my holster, and scamper up the ladder to the exit portal, not knowing where my next adventures will lead.

LEVEL 13

For most people, thirteen is a loaded number. Some regard it with dread, such as when a Friday falls on the thirteenth day of the month. Architects and contractors often omit the thirteenth floor of a skyscraper, believing it might bring bad luck. For me, on the other hand, it has always been a lucky number. And luck is something I need plenty of as I contemplate the intricate array of moss chambers bedecking the thirteenth cavern of my financial quest.

1. Three monks stand above me like buzzards in a nest, watching my every move. I subdivide the cavern into three vertical sections—a welcome break from the diagonal madness of the last two—and decide to concentrate on the eastern section. The monks fall to the cavern floor, their robes billowing like small parachutes. I climb the ladders of the eastern chambers and stop to wait in the large chamber of the northeastern corner. Staring upward, I see reams of coins hanging like golden ornaments from a Christmas tree. I pluck two and wait until my mentally deficient fiends halt on the opposite side of the cavern, at the same level, the bottom two apparently not minding the incredible foot odor of the top two.
2. With quick surefootedness, I make a death-defying leap down to the cavern floor and ascend the painter’s ladders of the center chamber

**LEVEL 13**

group. The three red stooges parachute down and begin their pursuit. Their minds wander when I reach the roof of the first moss chamber. When they come back to the present, they stop at what will become their favorite roost on the west side of the cavern. I blast a hole through the roof and start vacuuming—nothing like a little housecleaning. The procedure is rather mechanical but nonetheless rewarding. I fill my pockets in the next chamber without threat of retaliation, then ascend to the top tier. I swing across the beam to the roof of the largest moss chamber and begin my vertical sweep. I repeat this loop twice more until the northeastern chamber is properly denuded of all holiday ornamentation.

3. Using a new tack, I lured the three red blind mice to within inches of me on the cavern floor, then sprint up the central ladders to the roof of the northwestern chamber. Two follow, one doubles back. They seem programmed to protect that one moss chamber at all costs.

My superior speed gives me enormous advantage as I fire through the roof of the chamber and clutch two gold coins in my fist. Running with the money still in hand, I dive east to evade the one guard. I repeat this same maneuver one more time until the leafy bower has been completely cleansed.

4. Though no gold coins remain, the gray exit door does not appear on cue as it normally does. One of the three monks must still have some loot. I don't need to trap them, however. They're so twisted with rage that they've become rather sloppy. While pursuing me on the cavern floor, they willingly forfeit what few coins are still in their possession. I have trouble getting safely down to them, so I bait the gold carrier up to the roof and trap him there, making him toss up the coin. With my job complete, I skip up to the heavenly gates.

Red Alert

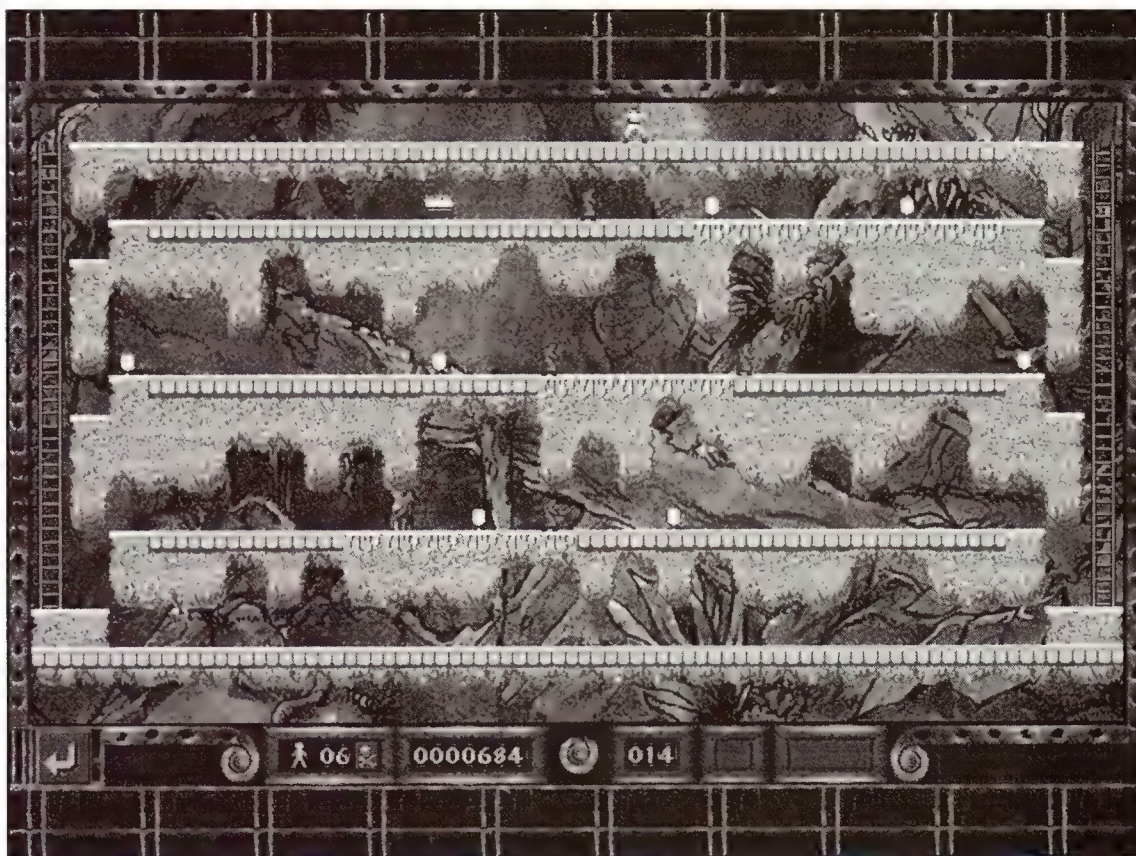
CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTION

In another variation, I saw how it could have been possible to either snatch up the gold from the cavern floor or bait a monk to bring it to me. Either way, it's unnecessary for me to retrieve the two coins in the southwestern quadrant since one way or another the monks deliver it to me at the end of my sojourn.

LEVEL 14

More of the tar turf, and in far greater quantities than in the first encounter! The sap-like substance is truly thicker—and slower!—than molasses. Maybe it's a by-product of excessive moss. I'll let the botanists figure it out. In any case, this cavern has by far the densest amount of moss I've seen yet. And the air is more damp and dingy than in the other places, too. To get to the hidden treasure, I must repeatedly carve my way through the mossy overgrowth. But through baiting and delaying tactics, I still manage to rob the cavern of its gold coins.

1. For once, I begin from the top level. The fourteenth moss cavern has two long ladders, which run along the west and east borders, and a series of four long tunnels. The middle three have thick, long tar slicks. I steadfastly avoid the bottom tunnel, since it provides no



LEVEL 14

exit. As I blast a hole through the roof of the uppermost tunnel to get the gold coin, I hold onto one thought: draw the monks as close as possible so that when I approach from the other side, the pool of orangey gook will help me get to the loot before they do .

2. I work my way down the eastern flank. After leaping to safety, I turn to blast entry into the tunnel below. I have to move quickly, for while the gold coin is easily within reach, my feet are stuck in tar turf, and the monk has the speed advantage of running across smooth bed-rock. I bore an exit hole and slip through before he gets me.
3. I enter the third tunnel not so much to grab money, but to draw the monk as far to the east as possible. The money will come once I snatch it from the other side. Getting down to the third floor requires a two-step shooting and descending series: shoot, step back, shoot again, then move forward and blast down into the

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narrow space. This little red fellow comes pretty close to getting me, but I turn and fire through the exit patch just in time to elude his death grasp.

4. Having completed my work for the first stage, I then scale up the ladder and head west for the other side. Most of the money that eluded my long reach during the first stage now becomes easy pickings, thanks to the glue-like sludge that impedes the red devils. With methodical precision, I carve entry into each of the three tunnels, each time mindful of drawing the monks as close as possible. The most difficult point of entry prove to be the third tunnel entrance, just as it was from the eastern side. But by repeating the descending series technique from a mirror perspective, I manage to get most of the lucre. Two gold coins still remain, so I truck to the eastern ladder a second time for the final sweep.
5. Thanks to careful planning, and a precise sequence of blasts through the turf, I manage to take the first gold coin from the top tunnel and the second gold coin from the third tunnel. Getting to tunnel three proves just as difficult as before, but by planning each of the three blasts in careful succession, I trigger the magic gray door, which appears on the fourth forbidden tunnel.

LEVEL 15

The fifteenth cavern of the moss kingdom proves to be the most demanding, but for reasons that have more to do with finesse and coordination than a well-formulated strategy. Ironically, I begin at the bottom near the exit vault, but to get the key I must travel all the way to the top moss ridge, which is closely guarded. The second irony: I can't find any treasure in this cavern, save for the gold key at the top. But through a combination of baiting the monks and precise timing, I eventually strip-mine the last cavern of its supply of gold.

1. To draw the nearest monk toward me, I move just beyond the first short ladder. When I see that he's in close range, I turn and rush up the ladder. I don't need to wait for him to touch the first rung; as soon as he's close enough, I tip-toe over his head and dash to the

**LEVEL 15**

- second ladder. Narrowly, I manage the same procedure with the second monk, skipping over his head like a stone skimming the surface of a lake.
2. I climb up the ladder that borders the lower half of the cavern's western edge, then make a short crab step to the suspended foot ladder. As soon as I reach the stop, the third monk on the second tier runs away from me. I wait until he's far enough from the ladder so that I can reach it first, then sprint for the second foot ladder in the middle of the tier. With two monks approaching from the rear, I waste no time in making the overhead dash for the ladder that leads up to the next tier.
 3. Repeating the same maneuver, I easily make it past the monk-guard on the second highest tier. The difficulty comes when I approach the key-guard. He protects it with fierce dedication. I crank up my reflexes to move faster than a hummingbird. First, I blast the moss tuft adjacent to the ladder. Then I scamper in for the key, pick it up,

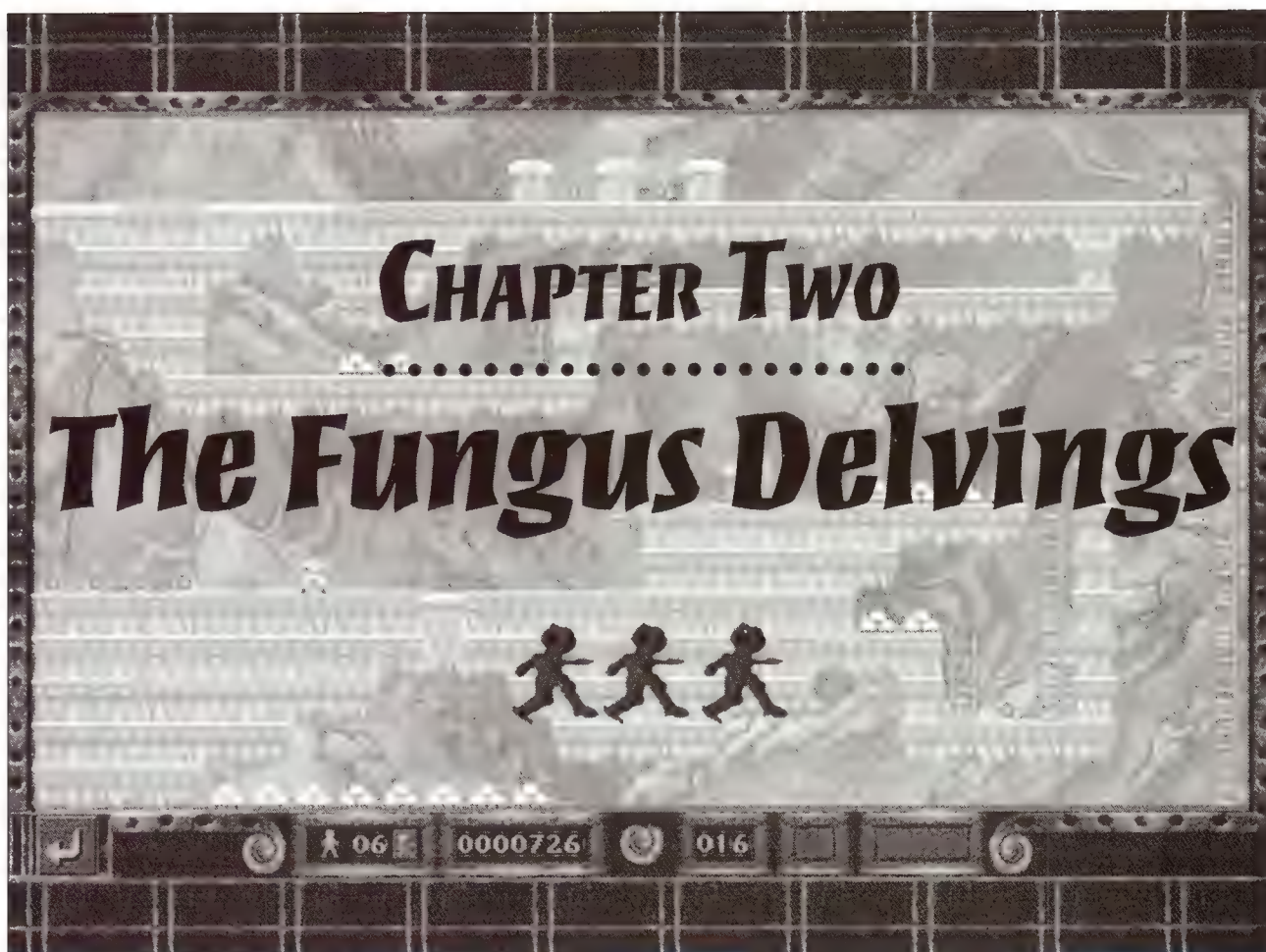
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side-walk past the ladder, and fall just west of it. I then leap into a free fall over the western edge of the tier to evade these exasperated ghouls.

4. Though I have the key in my possession, getting to the vault exit is no easy task. Monks are coming at me from all sides. The quickest, or rather the only, route to the exit comes indirectly. By standing just a step west of the ladder, I find shelter from the falling red monks. I attract the monks up the ladder and draw those by the vault exit toward the ladder, creating enough free space around the exit to safely get out. I time my jump over the far eastern edge with perfect accuracy and run to the key door. Thank goodness I have the right key!

CONCLUSION

Once I complete the fifteenth moss cavern, I leave the kingdom of the moss caverns forever behind me. While hurtling through space to my next destination, I check my map of the Evil Empire and realize that my next stop is the dreaded fungus delvings.



After I leave the moss caverns, I receive a communication from my friends at the CIA. They want an update on my progress. What can I tell them? The truth? I fake a little distortion, tell them that I can't understand them, that it's dangerous to contact me now because the signal might alert the mad monks to my presence, and that I'll contact them at the safest possible moment. Then I chuck the walkie-talkie into the chasm and watch it smash on the rocks below. Progress report. Not too likely.

I'd like to say that the russet brown fungus delvings are a welcome change, but that isn't the case. The odor, for one, is even stronger. Like the moss, the fungus grows back in seconds, and I have to avoid getting trapped in a pit of my own making. But there are benefits. I discover a new tool called *small bombs*. Already a demolitions expert, I quickly learn how to detonate small bombs in strategic places. They wipe out turf and monks both, but they don't

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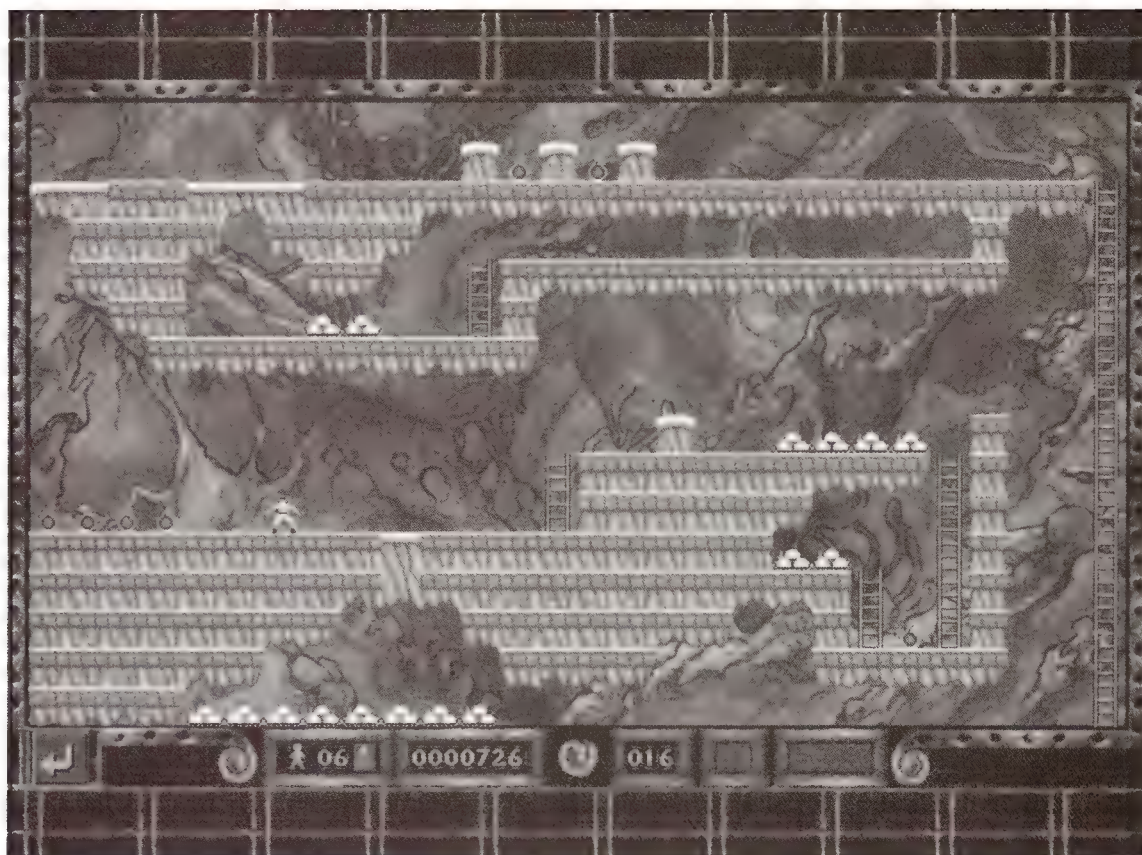
damage bedrock or turf tar at all, and I have to maintain a safe distance from the blast. Sometimes this is no easy feat.

At any one time, I can keep only four bombs on hand. I only have so many hooks on my belt, and the small bombs are unstable enough that I don't want them knocking against each other and blowing me to kingdom come. Always prepared for the unanticipated, I find my trusty disposable lighter—a more reliable flame source than ordinary matches in these moist climes—and never have a problem lighting fuses.

LEVEL 16

Small bombs, treasure, and no monks. This will be like taking golden candy from a baby. But I take advantage of this opportunity to refresh my knowledge of demolition. With a limited supply of bombs, I have to make sure that I don't run out at a crucial moment. This turned out to be a lesson in the conservation of explosive resources.

1. Since they look like they might come in handy, I run west to pick up the four bombs lying there. There's an opening in the bedrock in the middle of the terrace, but I opt instead to climb the ladder up to the next plateau. A tuft of fungus, too massive for me to climb over, blocks my progress. There's only one choice: blow it out of the way!
2. Later, I'll have to blow it up a second time to make it back to the terrace. But first, I delve into an opening and find a small bomb at the foot of the ladder. My total bomb count rises to four as I scale a second painter's ladder and remove the remaining stockpile of treasure. I then retrace my steps up the first painter's ladder and detonate the tuft a second time.
3. With three bombs left, I set one over the fungus clearing, wait at a safe distance, and then drop through the chasm to the cavern floor. Fortunately, my elastic rucksack easily makes room for the plethora of gold lying unguarded there. I dash to the ladder along the eastern border and climb to the top.
4. Once on the top terrace, I discover a row of fungus tufts growing like giant mushrooms. I only have two small bombs left in my possession, so I have to plan carefully how to remove these three with only

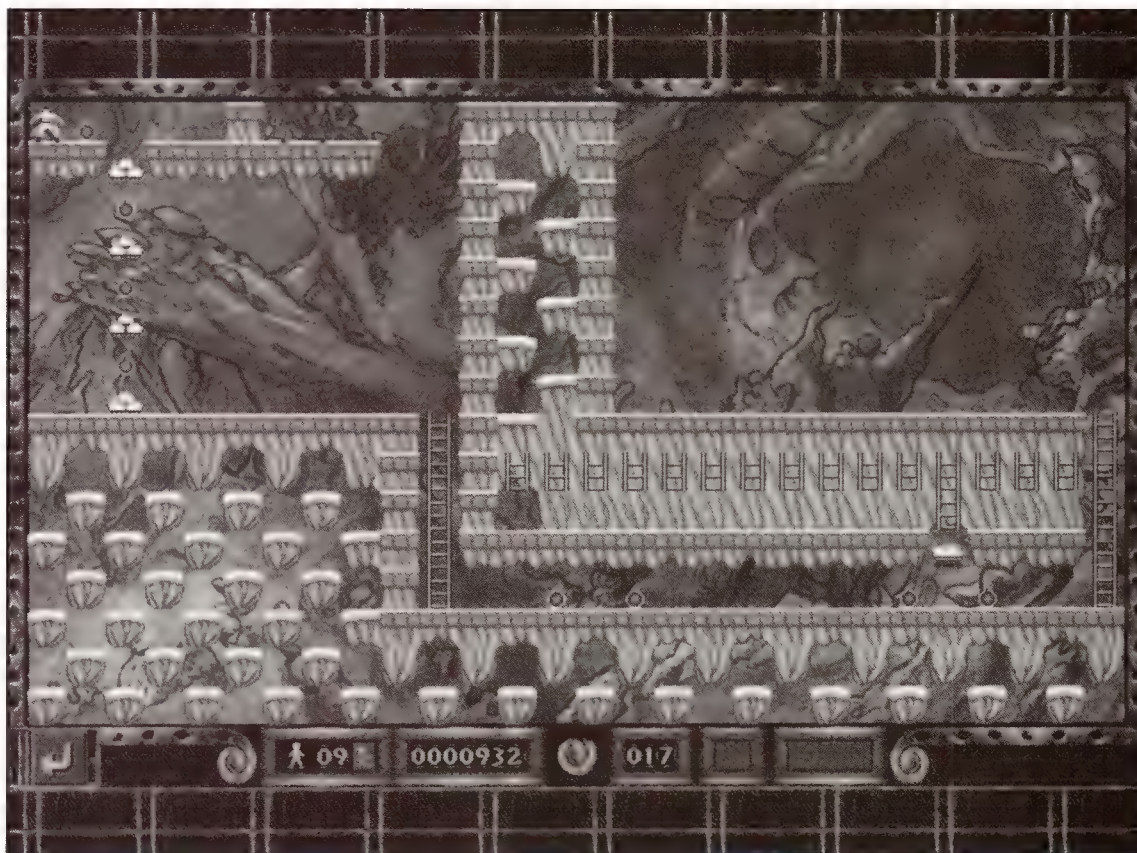
**LEVEL 16**

two explosives. But when I plant the first small bomb, it causes a chain reaction that detonates the other bombs resting snug in between. The area now cleared of impediments, I move west.

5. I only have one bomb left, so it has to count. I cross my fingers, set the bomb over the fungus clearing, and wait. The blast suffices. I drop through the fissure and find myself in a fungus and bedrock chamber that leads above to a narrow tunnel. When I retrieve the last of the gold ingots, the familiar gray exit door materializes at the eastern end of the tunnel.

LEVEL 17

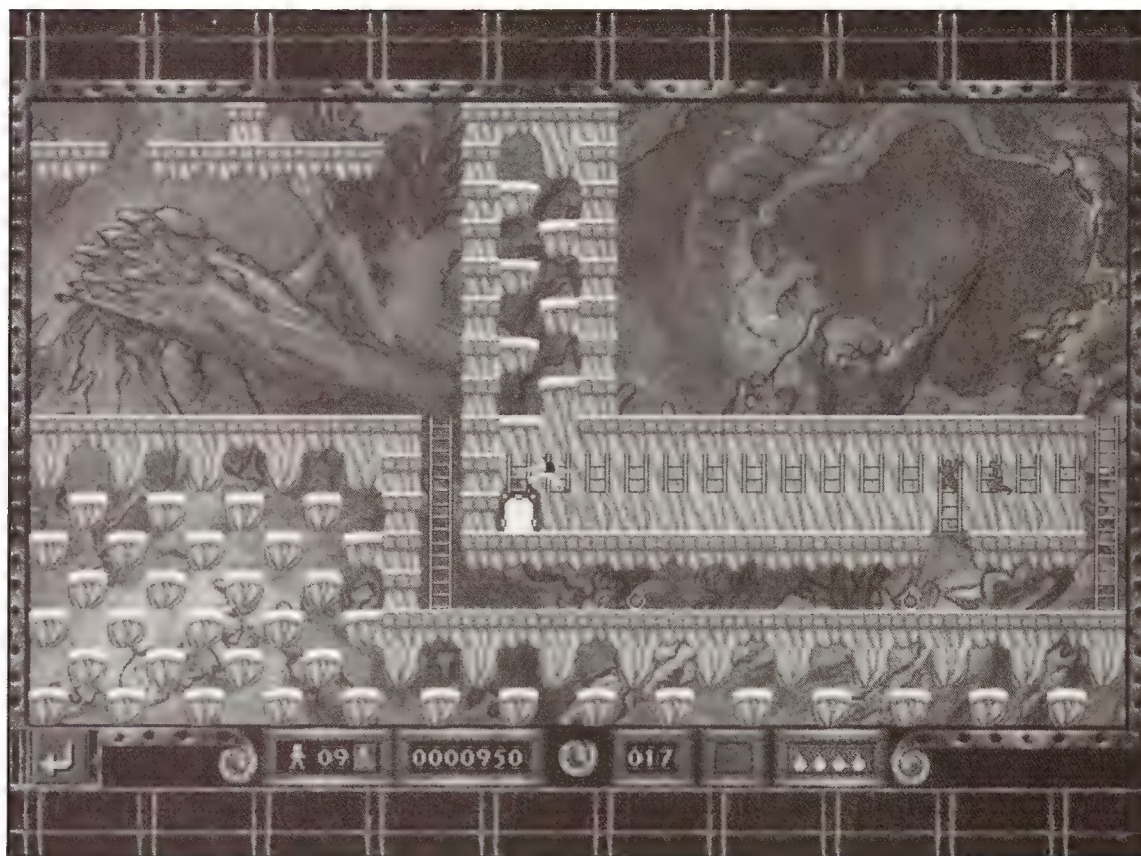
In the next fungus delving, I find two red “mongus” standing on the same ridge as me. Fortunately, a fungus tuft separates us so I can concentrate on picking up the gold and the small bombs that hang suspended in mid-air right below. Farther east, a large tower stands in the middle of the



LEVEL 17

cavern, but it doesn't contain any treasure so I ignore it. In fact, there isn't much treasure at all on this level: just the gold bars directly below and a treasure chest buried deep in the fungus on the eastern side.

1. I pick up the small bomb and then jump through the shaft, sweeping through the airborne cache of treasure and small bombs—four, to be exact. The two mad monks, meanwhile, drift down not far from where I landed. I dispense with them quickly by detonating a small bomb in their midst. If you look closely, you can see their ashes in the blast.
2. I sprint to the ladder and descend it once while the two monks materialize on the eastern side of the tower. While running through the tunnel, I pick up another small bomb (the other three have to be left behind) and plant it at the foot of the ladder, then double back to wait for the explosion. The bomb incinerates the monks just as they start across the tunnel floor.



LEVEL 18

3. Once again the monks appear on the eastern face of the tower, but I estimate that I have enough time to make it up the ladder halfway and then penetrate into the fungus hedge. When I stand over the treasure chest, I drop down to the tunnel floor and then loop around a second time, climbing the ladder and jetting through the fungus hedge again. Setting a bomb isn't necessary as I gain enough of a distance advantage and charge through the gray exit door.

LEVEL 18

The third fungus delving would interest a botanist. Whether shaped naturally or by alien hands, the fungus and bedrock grow in irregular “S” shapes that sway dizzyingly overhead, almost like seaweed. I don't find any monks close by, but then the only gold artifact is a dire-looking

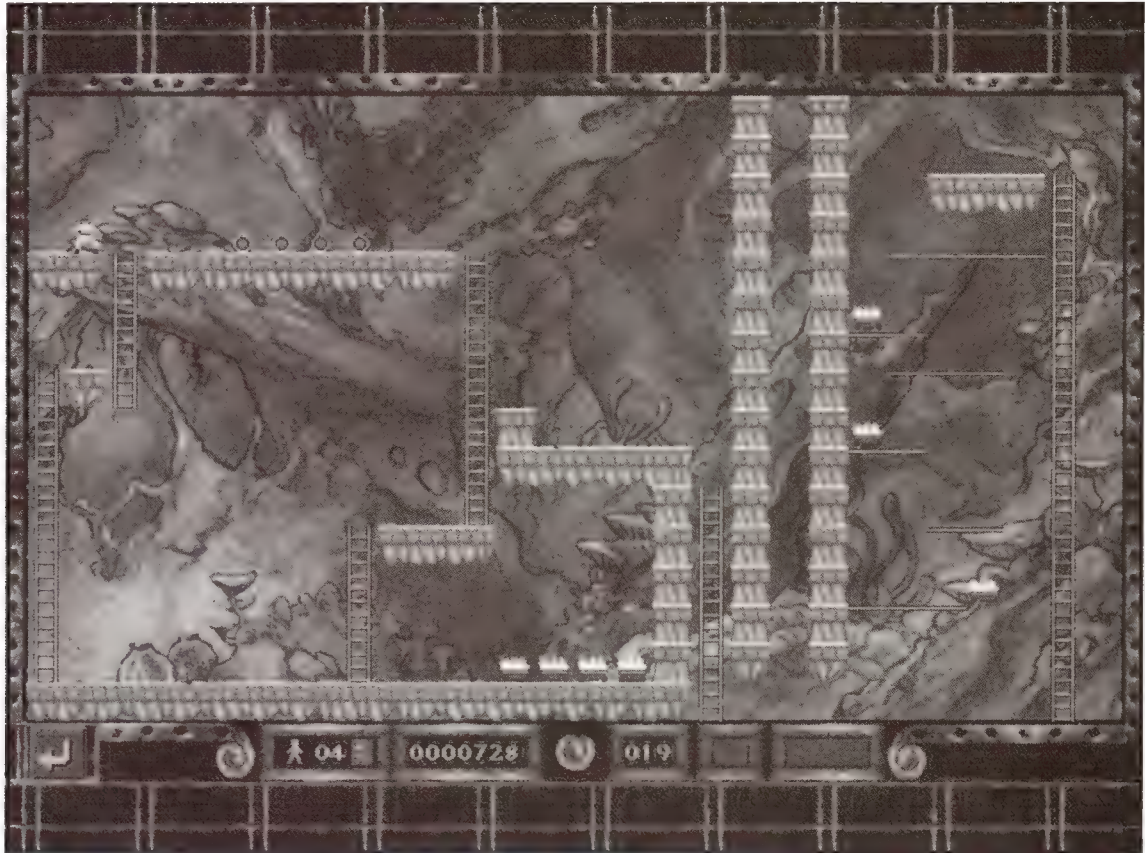
death's-head. The trick of getting to it involves careful pyrotechnical planning. In other words, I have to make sure I don't get blown up while blowing through the fungus barriers.

1. I gather up the small bomb and leap down to the surface of a T-shaped ridge. I place the small bomb between the two slabs of bedrock on the tender fungus, then hurry off the ridge and wait for the blast. After the smoke clears, I run east to the ladder exit.
2. I climb down the painter's ladder and dash west along the cavern floor, finding there the western painter's ladder, which I scale up to a halfway point. To get to the death's-head, I have to find another small bomb. On the other side of the second T-shaped ridge, I find just what I'm looking for and plant the explosive right over the fungus. Sailing downward, I hear the blast overhead and quickly circle around to retrieve the golden figure, wondering what strange religion it belonged to. It definitely looks like an archaeological treasure.
3. As soon as I stuff the false idol into my backpack, the heavenly gates appear overhead. To reach the ladder, I circle around again and wait for the ridge to grow back. Once there, I leisurely make my way up the ladder, whistling the theme from *Raider's of the Lost Ark*. If only those monks could see me now.

LEVEL 19

By the time I reach the fourth fungus delving, my eyes adjust enough to the peculiar orange light to detect the monks. They don't stand out as clearly as before against the green background of the moss caverns. But although they're better camouflaged here, my eyes are sharp. My vision adapts just in time, since now I face a markedly more complex cavern layout, with two aggressive monks guarding the empire's treasure. With only four bombs at my disposal, I have to plan my foray with economical precision.

1. The small bombs will come in handy against the monks, so I first grab those and then head back to the first ladder. I descend the ladder to the point where it swerves left, baiting the monk as far away



LEVEL 19

as possible from the cavern floor. When I catch a whiff of his fetid breath, I leap into a free fall to the cavern floor.

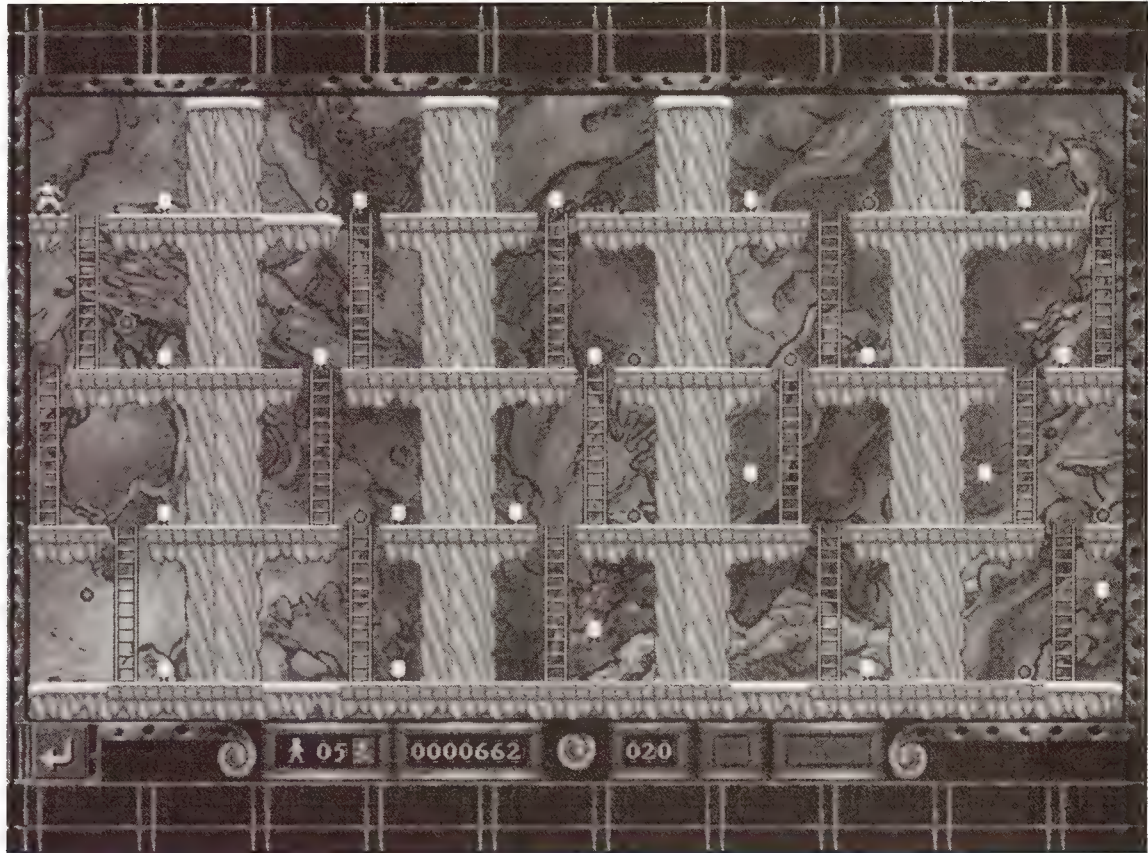
2. As soon as I touch ground, I dart to the stacks of gold bars on the eastern end of the chamber, then rush back to the painter's ladder. The monk is closing in quickly, but I manage to edge beyond his grasp just in time and rush up the second ladder that stands smack in the center of the fungus delving. It's not one continuous ladder, for I have to take a few steps east to get to the long ladder. At the top of the ladder, I manage to vault over the fungus knoll and land safely on the other ledge. Best of all, I've completed the first part of my mission without wasting a single bomb, leaving me four to use in the eastern half of the cavern.

3. I thought that the monk would follow me over to where I now stand, but instead he seems to be searching for me through the fungus overgrowth. Meanwhile, another monk is see-sawing at the head of the ladder. Gingerly, I toe the edge of the ridge and wait for the precise moment when I can toast this monk. Unfortunately, I can't toss the bomb onto his head and be done with it; I have to set it down next to him, and since there's no way to do this safely from the stairs, I have to place the bomb as close to the edge of the ridge as possible. Since it all has to do with timing, I study his oscillations: it seems that if I set the bomb as he moves downward, the blast will catch him on the way up.
4. With that monk removed, I rush down the rungs of the ladder and dart east along the cavern floor. While the reincarnated monk floats downward, I scale up the eastern ladder to the parallel beam that spans the first treasure chest. Like a gymnast, I swing this way and that, careful to hang directly above the chests of gold, until the familiar intonation of the gray exit door rings out. Before the monk can come near me, I dive into the ethereal wash cycle.

LEVEL 20

This fungus delving has five columns, each consisting of four chambers. Vicious and intelligent monks occupy three of the five columns, and they're dying to rip me to shreds. But by bombing, baiting, and waiting, I figure out how to outwit the fungus demons.

1. Cleaning up the first column of gold is easy; getting to the next one, however, requires some planning. After careful surveillance, I elect to puncture through the bottom chamber. I climb the ladder and wait for the blast. Once I drop to the cavern floor, the monk comes tearing through. I elude him by starting up the ladder, then hop over his head before the partition materializes. He happens to be carrying gold on him, so I'm careful not to let the gold coin get trapped on the other side.
2. Once in the second column, my monk problem doesn't immediately end. This is a persistent monk. I lead him up the painter's ladders to the dividing layer between the first (from the top) and second

**LEVEL 20**

chambers, planting a small bomb just above the middle rung of the ladder. The monk walks into the trap and gets blown to pieces. The blast also creates a hole in the top chamber, so after collecting the gold coin, I drop through the chamber. He reincarnates in the first chamber of the second column and speeds down the ladders toward me. Swiftly, I plant the third small bomb next to the partition of the third chamber and climb below for safety. After the blast, I draw the second mad monk through the opening and hop over his head. He follows me back through, but the first monk remains behind, fearful of abandoning his domain.

3. The second mad monk follows me into the third column and up the painter's ladders. I set a bomb to go off on the ladder of the second chamber, and he walks right into it. Thankfully, he rematerializes in the second column behind me, so I sweep the third column of its gold cache without him being a complication. I set a bomb in the

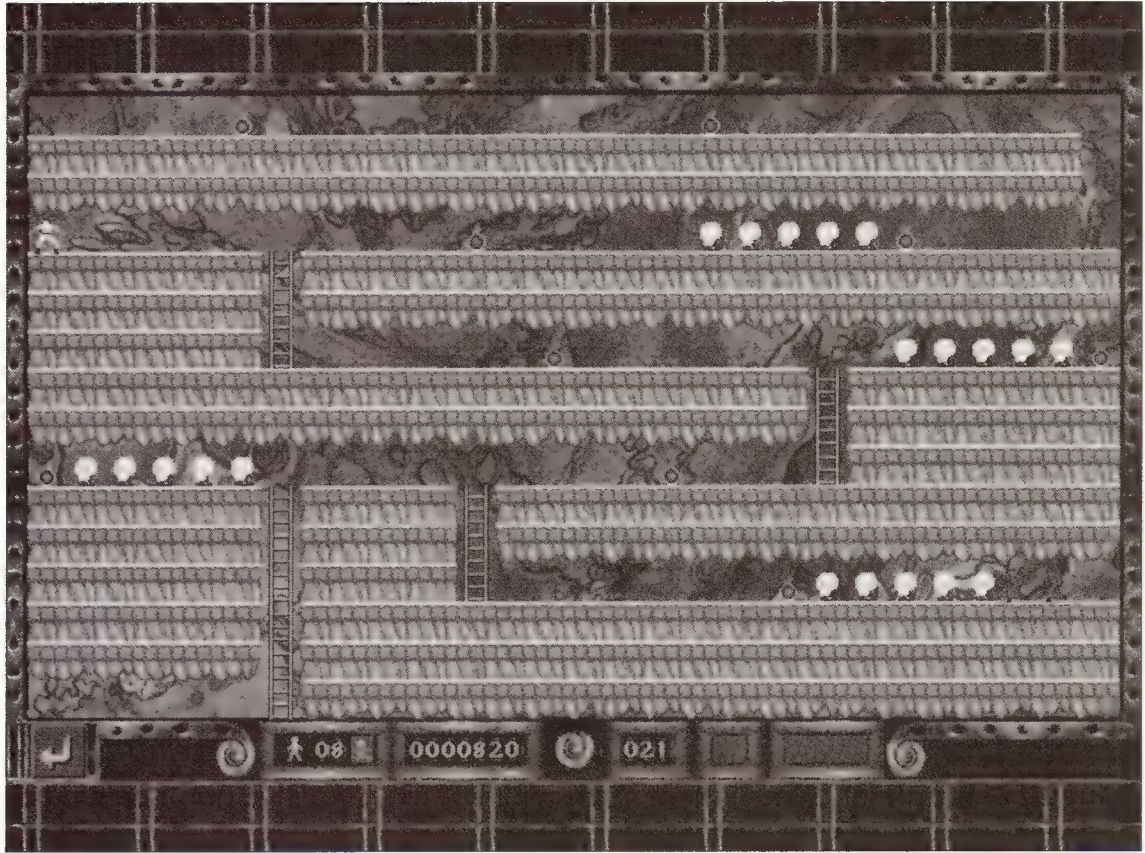
third chamber of the third column to blast entry into the fourth column. No monks occupy it, so I have no trouble scouring through it. I then plant a bomb in the third chamber from the top and wait to make an entry in the fifth and final column.

4. The last monk comes through at top speed. The advantage of this chamber in the fourth column turns out to be the location of the ladder. The monk has to travel a greater distance to get to me. I hop over his head and run forward into the fifth column. There is gold to be taken, but I first have to get rid of him. On my way up the ladder, I set a bomb and wait for the blast. It catches him smack dead in the center. Since he reincarnates in the second column with his other two cohorts, I finish my sweep of the delving. I hold my breath while I pick up the last gold coin. If the gray exit door doesn't materialize, then I'll have to backtrack and find out which monk is carrying it. It does materialize, and I make a graceful exit.

LEVEL 21

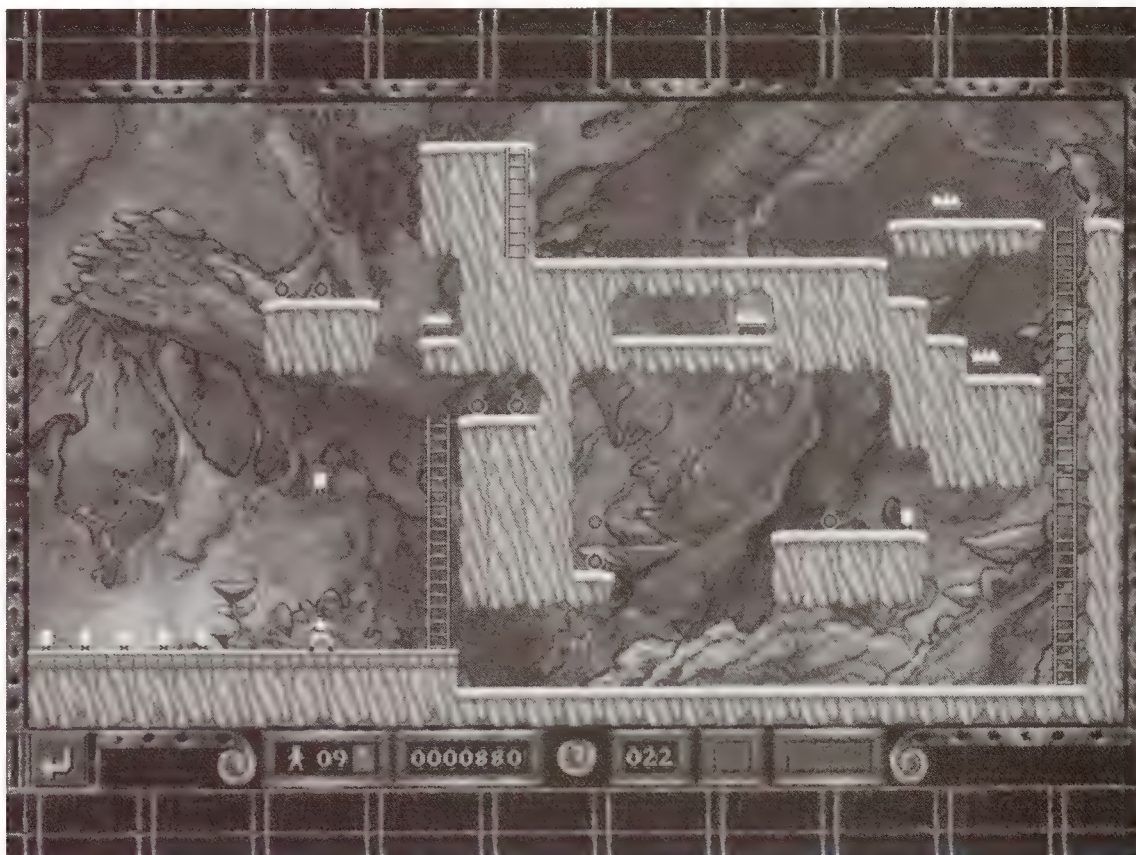
Spending so much time this far below sea level, my mind begins to play tricks on me. I could have sworn that I was standing inside some giant warped peanut butter sandwich, with the fungus as the peanut butter and the bedrock as the bread layers. When common sense returns, I note a problem. Because of all the bedrock, there is no way I can trap the two monks in pits. Instead I'll have to use the abundance of small bombs to blast them out of my way as I gather up the crop of golden skulls.

1. I run east across the tier, collecting gold and two small bombs. I still have time to descend the painter's ladder to the tier below, planting one of the two small bombs in my inventory at the head of the stairs. Luckily, I catch both of them in the blast. This frees me to finish my duties on that tier and then move below.
2. The two monks reemerge at opposite corners of the delving floor. They're quick to sniff me out. While running west to pick up the five golden skulls on this tier, I place a small bomb at the top of the painter's ladder. That takes care of one monk, but I still have

**LEVEL 21**

another coming toward me from the second ladder over. It takes another bomb to get rid of him. They just keep coming at me, and I keep detonating small bombs until I feel free to climb down to the next tier below.

3. Rather than panic, I prefer to be patient. You have to be an optimist in my profession. Once I get down to the last tier, I set charge to another small bomb as these zombies keep coming after me. I feel like I'm in a George Romero movie, but the dawn of day comes soon in the form of a gray exit door on the top tier. I scale up the ladders and sprint the final stretch into the heavenly wash cycle.



LEVEL 22

LEVEL 22

Except for the fresh-baked bread that hangs suspended on the western side, this fungus delving does not bring any particular cuisine to mind, nor did Euclid leave his mark in the architecture's geometry. But it does have several complexities that require both my laser blaster and the small bombs that litter the cavern. I also manage to do a lot of air time.

1. The cavern floor consists of an upper deck made of bedrock and a lower deck made of turf. At the end of the bedrock deck stands a long ladder leading up to a cave. Inside the cave I find two small bombs, which I hook on my belt. The three mad monks clamber up the long ladder to corner me in the cave, but at the last moment I sidestep them into a freefall. Just west of the ladder, I plant a small

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bomb, and as they come down to chase me, they all fry in the blast. As they materialize overhead, I suck up the gold coins on the upper bedrock deck.

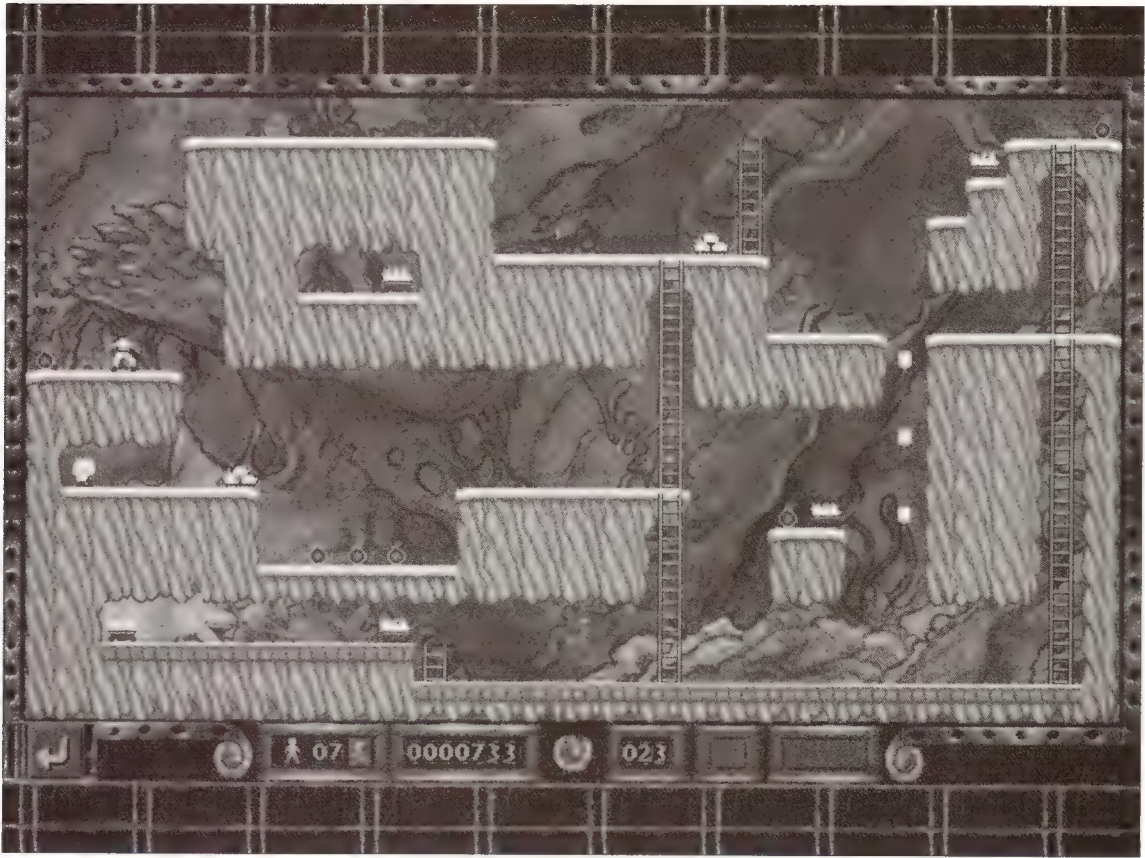
2. I hop off the upper deck to the lower deck of the cavern floor with three angry monsters bearing down. I set a small bomb near the juncture. The blast carves a crater into the fungus floor, causing a temporary setback to the home team. I continue my long bomb pattern to the long ladder on the eastern edge and ascend to the upper turf tier.
3. Near the top of the ladder, I glance at a treasure chest that looks like a short walk away. However, I know about the trap-door turf that runs alongside the eastern long ladder. Not wanting a brush with the mad monks, I continue to the top and work on a plan of access from the other side. This turns out not to be a descending series in the traditional sense. I blast two adjacent pits on the top, then two more on the next level until I become level with the chest. I then turn and face my blaster west at the last remaining turf square to punch an exit hole. On my way out, I pick up a small bomb for good measure.
4. I land on the bread loaf, remove the small bomb and gold coin, and then drop to the lower decking. A lone monk, separated from the pack, descends the ladder toward me. A pop from my laser pistol traps him in the pit, and I boogie overhead.
5. Returning to the turf tier, I run west to the edge of the long chamber. There's a gold chest inside it, and I know a well-placed blast will simplify entry. By setting down a small bomb on the turf square just west of the chamber's edge, I gain easy access to the gold therein. I then blast an escape hole through the western end and drop down to a small ledge, where I find two stacked small bombs.
6. From the isolated safety of my ledge, I contemplate my next move. I have to scale the eastern long ladder again in order to achieve my next aim, but there are monks both to the east and west of my position. Deciding to conserve my bombs, I blast two trenches on both sides of me. The monks fall in sidelong, and I hop over the two between me and the long ladder.

7. Up the ladder, west across the tier, and this time up a painter's ladder, I eventually climb to the top of a fungus bluff that reminds me of a Joshua tree. It would take ages for me to carve through it with my laser blaster, so I detonate a small bomb on the western rim. I plant a second bomb on the freestanding turf square, then fire a single blast to gain access to the hidden treasure chest in the cave-alcove on the western face.
8. From the lip of the cave, I drop down to the cavern floor and head east for the eastern long ladder, trapping a monk along the way. This time from the bluff, I traverse west over the parallel bar until dropping down to the ledge below it, getting some gold and more small bombs in the process. And by carving a two-fer descending series through the ledge, I blast an exit hole through the center and pick up a gold coin on my descent.
9. The gray exit door materializes in the small cave where I'd once found a treasure chest, on the western face of the bluff. I cycle up to the top tier for the last time after trapping some monks in a trench on the lower deck. Had I two bombs, I would follow the same procedure as last time. Instead, I carve a vertical shaft with my laser pistol. The shaft borders the ladder. I then blast an exit hole that leads to the swirling time-warp cycle.

LEVEL 23

This fungus delving looks like an extension of the previous one, only more advanced. The key to completing my mission here involves a series of loops just like before, only this time I find the monks a little more intelligent and challenging. And there are a few surprises with regards to trap-door turf.

1. With a column of red paratroopers ready to greet me, there's no way I can snatch up the small bomb just west of me, though I know they might come in handy later. Nor does the golden skull look like a plausible take. Making a mental note of both their locations, I sprint east, dropping down once to take gold ingots, then into a crater, where I find three small bombs. At the eastern tip of the crater, I pass through trap-door turf to the top of a step ladder on the cavern

**LEVEL 23**

- floor. Just west of the top step, I find and take a treasure chest. The monks move too quickly for me to dally with further mining of the area, so I run to the central long ladder and scale it to the top.
2. At the top of the long ladder, I dash to a painter's ladder that allows access to a hand-over-hand bar. Crossing that west, I make my way to the top of the bluff and plant two small bombs adjacent to one another. The resulting blast takes care of most of the excavation work to the chamber below, so I drop inside and finish off the work with a blast from my laser pistol. The gleaming treasure chest fits easily in my pouch. I then blast an escape hole and drop through it to the tier below.
 3. I loop around again, climbing the long ladder and the painter's ladder to the jungle beam, crossing west to the fungus bluff. This time, though, I jump off the western lip to a short ledge on the western border, where this match began. I remember from my mental notes

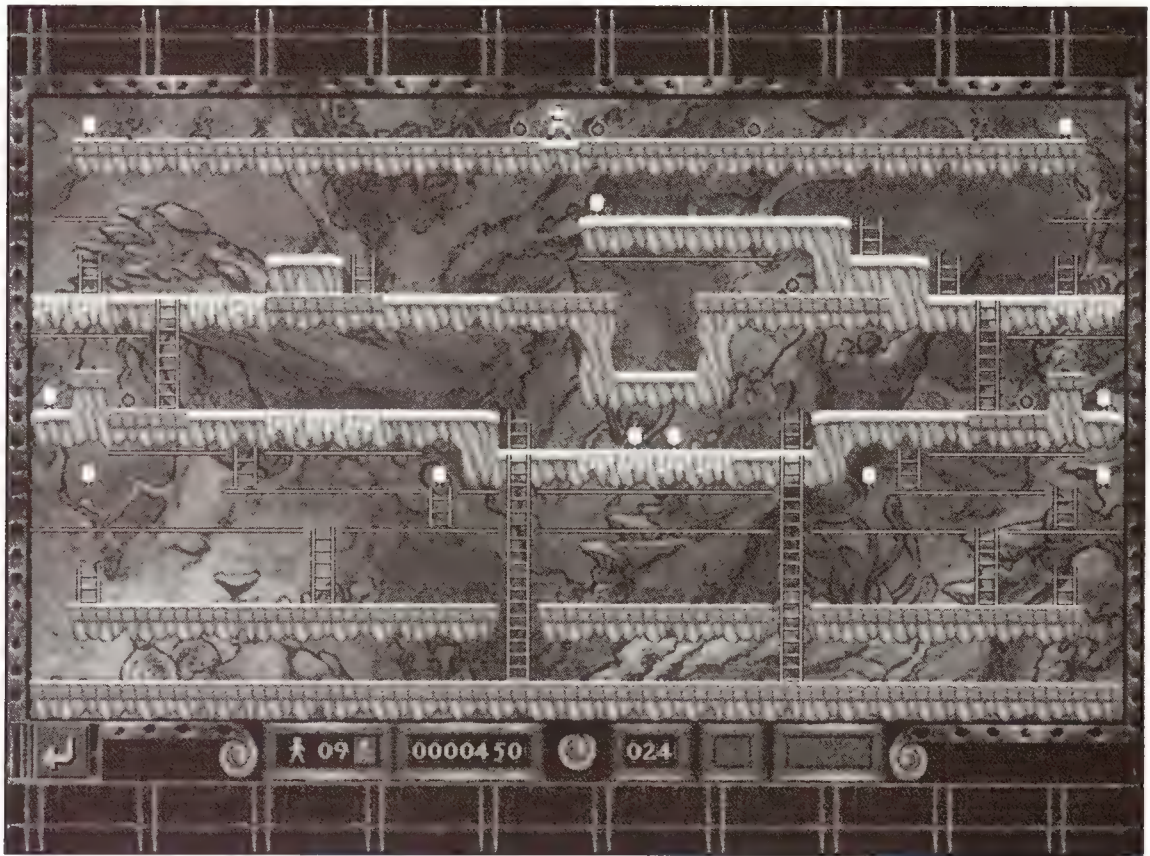
that a small bomb, a golden skull, and a treasure chest lie near this spot, and I intend to retrieve them now while the going is good. After hooking the small bomb on my belt, I fire an entry hole to where the golden skull sits, then step to the east and fall straight down through trap-door turf to the treasure chest beneath. I see the advance of the red monks and beat them to the base of the central long ladder. The force from the blast of the small bomb I planted there incinerates them instantly. I then clamber up the long ladder and, with arms akimbo, wait for them with an open challenge.

4. When the three get about halfway up the central long ladder, I run east and jump off the ledge to the second ledge below. The descending series of blasts forms a nice crater, through which I create an entry to the fungus ledge below. There, I collect a treasure chest and a small bomb. Meanwhile, the three monks sit poised level with me on the ladder, waiting for my next move. I jump down to the cavern floor and place a small bomb for them to run into. They all disintegrate in the small inferno.
5. Gold coins line the narrow chasm to the east. While the three monks rain down through the chasm, I travel up the central long ladder and run to the lip of the second ledge, waiting for them to continue up the ladder so that I can make a clean getaway. They move according to plan, and I leap through the narrow abyss, picking up gold tokens on my way down. I then clamber up the eastern long ladder to the top. I take the treasure chest to the west, and when the gray exit door materializes, I decide I won't be needing the small bomb in the northeast corner.

LEVEL 24

For the first time, I feel relief. A new challenge where I won't have to loop around five or six times to sweep the delving clean of the treasure. But nervous tension sets in as soon as I realize the pickle I'm in. Fortunately, I have enough small bombs close at hand and the wits and reflexes to escape.

1. Two mad monks approach from the west and one from the east. Running west, I snatch up the small bomb and set it down about half



LEVEL 24

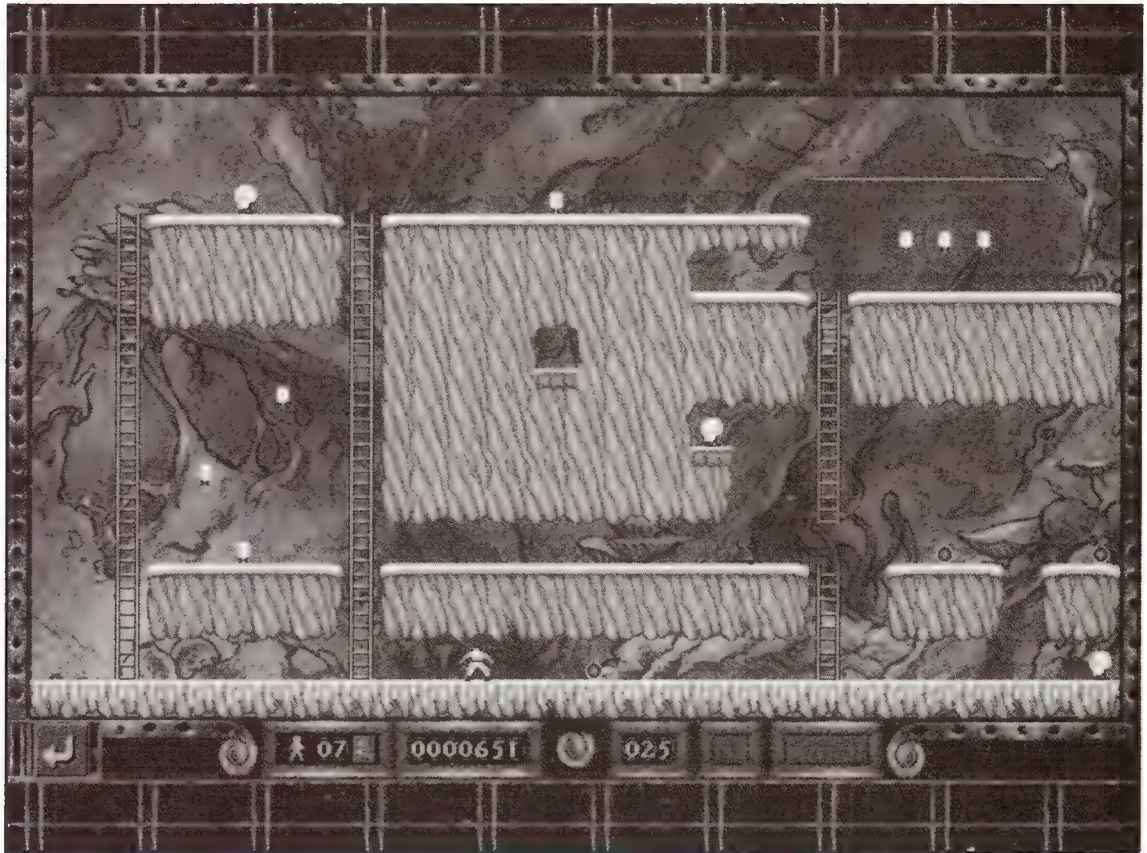
the distance between us. With no time to admire my handiwork and swift reflexes, I then hurry east to snatch up the first of two small bombs on that side of the tier. The first blast clears the area of the first two mad monks, so I have room to bait the third monk to the western side. The small bomb goes off in approximately the same place where the first one did. Free of monks for the time being, I swipe the two gold coins on either end and hook the small bomb on my belt.

2. I jump off the western edge of the tier and clasp the jungle beam below. Crossing a short distance east to the top of a step ladder, I then drop down onto the top of a painter's ladder. Surrounded by tar turf, a substance for which I have small regard, I blast an entry hole through a small patch of fungus turf. Down below, I find a small bomb that becomes the first of a chain reaction. Setting it where I found it, the small bomb lights the fuse of another small bomb

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embedded in the turf-stump nearby. This frees a path for me to collect a single gold coin: I cross the jungle beam and drop through the gap to another hand-over-hand bar below. I see a second gold coin not far from where I snatched this one, but I reason that it would be too time consuming and dangerous to try to retrieve it now. I'll come back for it later.

3. The cavern floor of this delving doesn't provide enough access for me to feel comfortable, so I don't drop down to that level. Instead, I swing over to the bedrock tier just above it and sprint across to the second long ladder. As I climb up this ladder, the remarkable symmetry of this cavern delving becomes apparent. On the opposite side, I find a fungus tuft identical to the one I just blew up. I know exactly what to do and plant the small bomb at the base of the tuft. After the dust clears, I drop through the gap and gather up both gold coins. They're both in a line.
4. This time, I've less distance to travel to make it to the same long ladder, but several red monks are coming close to intercepting me. At the top of the long ladder, I find a painter's ladder just a few steps east and ascend it and a step ladder to the top of a turf ledge. As I eventually discover, small bombs have been implanted in every turf square of this long ledge. I fire into the turf and drop through a gap that enables me to pick up two small bombs in one sweep. Moving west, I drop into a hollow shaped like a cauldron. The floor of the fungus cauldron consists of trap-door turf, so I make a graceful drop into the orange sludge of tar turf.
5. Slogging through tar turf while being chased by bloodthirsty brothers, I lose them for the time being as I climb up to the ledge a second time. This time, I place a small bomb on the lower ledge between the two step ladders. Gold mine! The blast reveals three gold coins, and I snatch them all in a sweep of my arm. I then drop down to the tier below through the blast hole and fire a single blast over a coin. I then drop through the escape hole and pick up an extra gold coin.
6. By now I've cleaned out the eastern and most of the western sections of the delving, but a clash with the mad monks seems imminent unless I move quickly. I traverse west across the jungle beam that runs almost the same length as the tier below it. Through a combination of hand-over-hand bars and ladders of varying sizes, I

**LEVEL 25**

move toward a gold coin underneath a turf niche. I then swing west across the jungle beam to the second coin that I left earlier—now the last one I'll grab—and pluck it from its place. Not one but two gray exit doors materialize below in opposite corners of the cavern floor. Because of its proximity, I drop down to the portal in the southwestern corner and disappear with a whoosh.

LEVEL 25

None of these caverns conforms to my idea of paradise, but somehow I expected this one to be a little more habitable. I've been in some sticky situations before, but none as sticky as this. Tar turf, that glutinous, toxic spillage that eats away at the soles of my hiking boots, covers the entire cavern floor. But when I realize it presents a problem for the monks as well, I learn how to use it to my advantage.

1. I begin this part of my journey knee-deep in this sludge. I wait at the bottom of the western long ladder. When the mad monk reaches the midpoint between the two long ladders, I make my break up the western ladder.
2. With him stuck in the tar turf and me on the free turf, I can cover two to three times as much ground. I stop level with the middle turf ledge and sprint across its length to seize the single gold coin. Then I ascend the central long ladder (I call it the central long ladder, even though it's slightly to the west) and run east across the fungus turf. Using the hand-over-hand bar, my hands lead me over three suspended gold coins. I elect to pick up the last in the series, although I know secretly I'll have to come up here at least twice more to get the other two.
3. Starting from the eastern edge of the bluff, I cut into the fungus ledge using the descending series method. Since I have to cut through three layers, I start with three blasts on top, then two on the next level, and then one exit blast at the bottom. I jump through the escape hole and land on the bread loaf ledge below. I scoop up the small bomb. I also note the golden skull lying thick in the turf tar below and add it to my macabre collection.
4. From the foot of the painter's ladder, I wait for the two monks to approach. Suppressing laughter at their awkward movements, I clamber up the ladder once they attain the midpoint under the ledge. I race west across the middle turf ledge and then ascend the central long ladder and followed the same loop as last time: east over the turf ledge and east over the jungle beam. At the appropriate space, I drop over the second gold coin and stash it in my rucksack.
5. Starting at the western edge this time, I blast a triple descending series, dropping down to the bread-loaf ledge below. I hook the small bomb on my belt and then hold my nose as I drop to the orange muck that covers the cavern floor. I catch another small bomb in my sights, one that I first noticed at the beginning of my adventures in the tenth fungus dwelling. I make it there just in time to grab it before the lead monk grabs me.
6. Making my third and final loop up this way, I climb the central long ladder, run east across the ridge and then swing over the third and

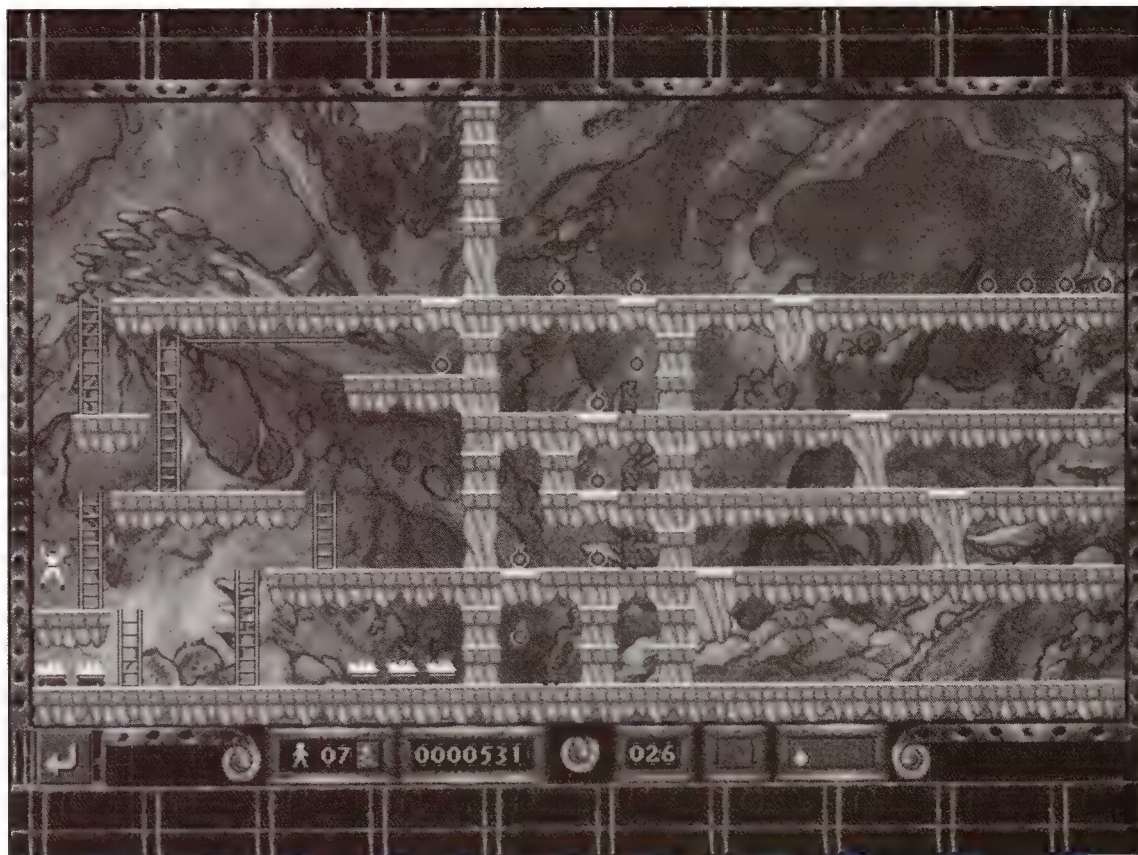
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final coin. To get to the golden skull in the cave below, I enter a cave and start a triple descending series. I plan my escape hole so that it will hover over the small alcove where the death's-head is hidden. I then leap from the ledge and land on the turf below, my feet planted, waiting for the monks to approach.

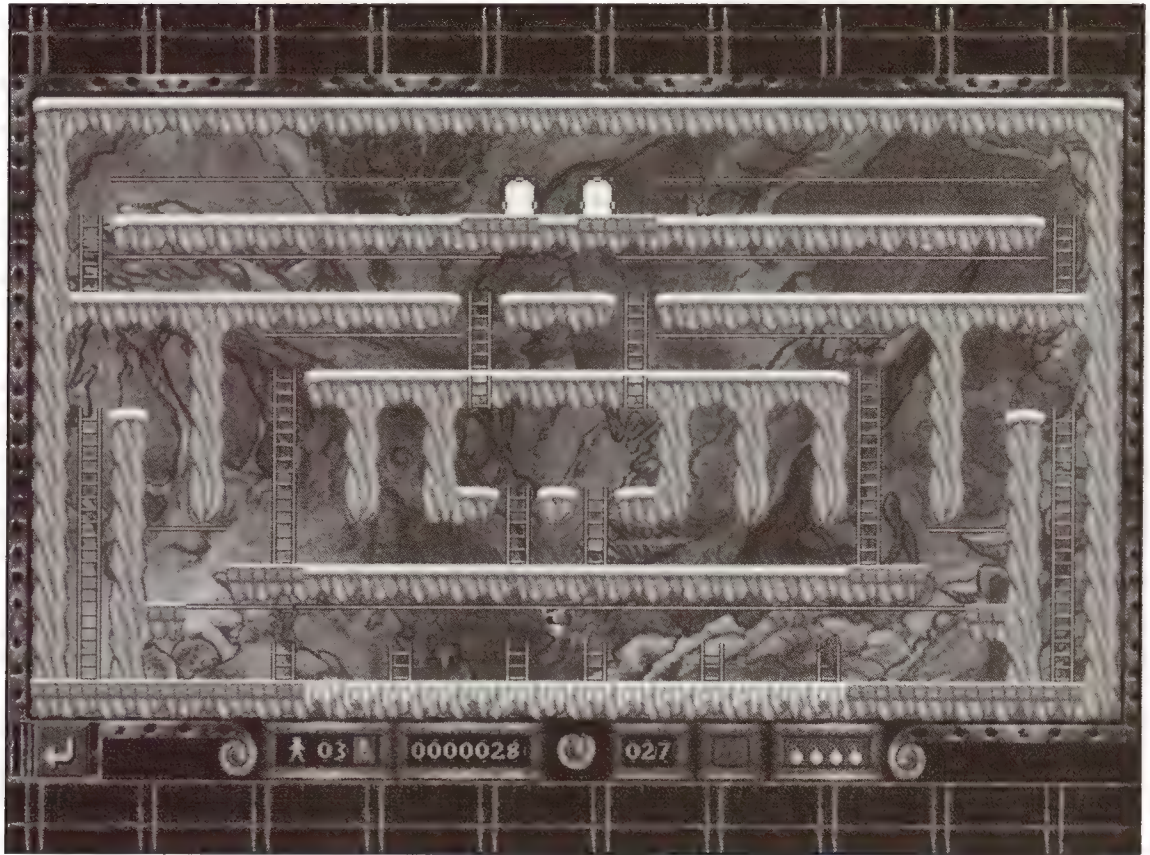
7. All this time, you may have been wondering, how come I haven't used the small bombs? Got to save the party favors for last. But first, I drop down to the cavern floor to lure my fellow brothers in the faith to the same midpoint. I love how one can predict their behavior sometimes. Once attained, I clamber up the central long ladder but this time go west, where I plant one small bomb just west of the ladder. The blast takes care of most of the work, and I finish off the rest with a laser blast, careful to make the exit hole directly over the suspended gold coin. I then leap into the void.
8. Wasting no time, I drop down to the turf tar next to the base of the western long ladder. The two monks come midpoint under the ledge, and I speed up the same ladder to the top of the ridge. To get to the last gold coin, I set two adjacent small bombs on the western side of the bluff, just east of the western long ladder. The blast carves a giant crater, which I jump into, and with a single blast from my laser shooter I escape through the gap and drop down over the gold coin.
9. When I touch down, the gray exit door manifests in the northwest corner of the fungus delving. I couldn't be in a better position to get there. I sidestep off the ledge, fall foot first on the tar turf, and then step onto the ladder and begin my ascent to freedom.

LEVEL 26

When I was a kid, my mom caught me firebombing the neighbor's mailbox. Ever since then, I've been a confirmed pyromaniac. M-80s were illegal, but I had a friend that would go south of the border and bring back a shoe box full of them from Tijuana. The eleventh fungus delving brings back those memories of happier times as I rediscovered the wonder and majesty of a small-bomb chain reaction.

**LEVEL 26**

1. A fungus and bedrock partition divides the delving into two sections. All the monks are on the other side, so like a kid in a candy store I clean up my side of the treasure chests with total ease. But when the gray exit door materializes in the southeastern corner, I realize that I'll have to get past those monks in their little cages. Though I have one small bomb on me, I ascend the painter's ladders to the second small bomb on the ledge.
2. From that ledge, I climb back down to the ledge above the cavern floor. This stretch of fungus would yield to a blast, so I set a bomb at the base of it and scramble up the stairs to get away from the explosion. What follows is a Pink Floyd light show. The bombs just keep hissing and exploding, hissing and exploding, thrashing through the monk chambers along the way, until finally they blow out an aperture on the top tier. I don't need any more cues than this, and I run through it. The only problem is this: all the monks reincarnate themselves on

**LEVEL 27**

my side, and one follows me through the aperture. The blast perforates a hole through the bedrock, and he's closing in. What should I do? Fall into a chamber and never be heard from again?

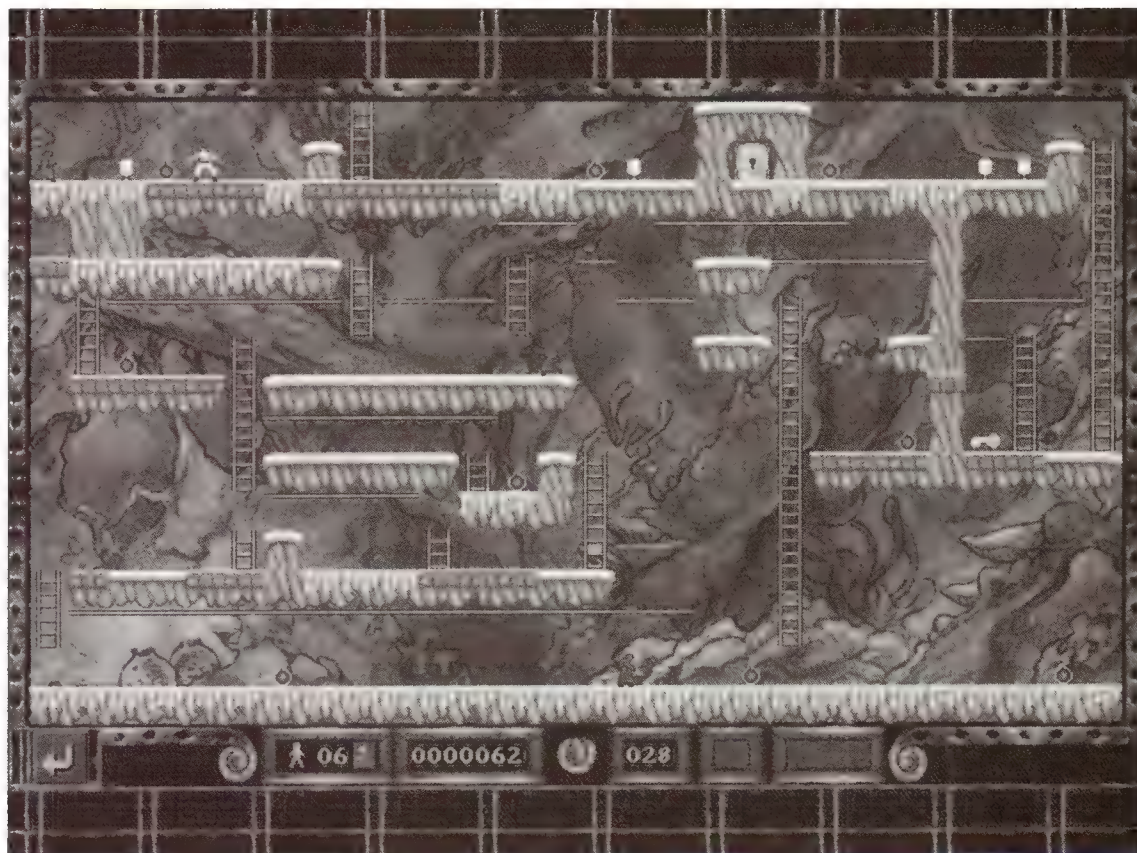
3. Just in the nick of time, the perforated hole grows back, and I charge east across it. I then place a bomb on a section of exposed turf, and predictably, he walks right into it.
4. When he dies and comes back on the other side of the divide—to use a little religious allegory—I'm free to blast my way through layer after layer of turf-exposed bedrock until finally finding the gray pearly gates.

LEVEL 27

As soon as I emerge through the threshold, I plunge downward through the center of the cavern, through layers of trap-door turf, while sweeping

the entire place clean of gold. By the time I land on the hand-over-hand bar, I hear two gray exit doors chime overhead and have exactly five nanoseconds to elude the red monks coming at me from both sides. Welcome to the twelfth fungus delving—now find a way out!

1. Two of those nanoseconds are spent in the realization that a) I have no use for the laser blaster, and b) there is no way to safely detonate small bombs, of which I have four in my inventory. That leaves the third most obvious, though least attractive option: hop over their heads. As the third nano-tick nears, I release my grip from the jungle beam and drop into the sticky ooze. The two monks follow suit. I make east for the step ladder and, when the malicious, conniving creeps come halfway into the goop, I reach above for the hand-over-hand bar and cross east to firm ground.
2. Now it's safe to start using the small bombs. The other two monks overhead have since floated down to the bottom, and those already down here approach the bedrock where I stand. I position a small bomb in the southeastern corner to begin a chain reaction, then rush back to the lip of the bedrock. I set down a second small bomb just as the lead monk comes within shaking hands distance.
3. As the bombs explode overhead, I make measured progress up the eastern long ladder, wary of getting fried and being doomed to repeat the process over again. Meanwhile, the mad monks start oscillating on the step ladders stuck to the cavern floor. My biggest adversary now will be the explosives themselves.
4. I see a turf ledge that leads to a short jungle beam. I traverse a short distance west to the base of a painter's ladder. I scale it, but not as quickly as I normally do. As the explosions continue to resound overhead, I grab the next jungle beam and traverse west toward the next ladder.
5. Using common sense, I clamber up the painter's ladder, cross east on the jungle beam to the next painter's ladder, then switch back on the final stretch of the jungle beam until I drop down and whoosh through the portal.



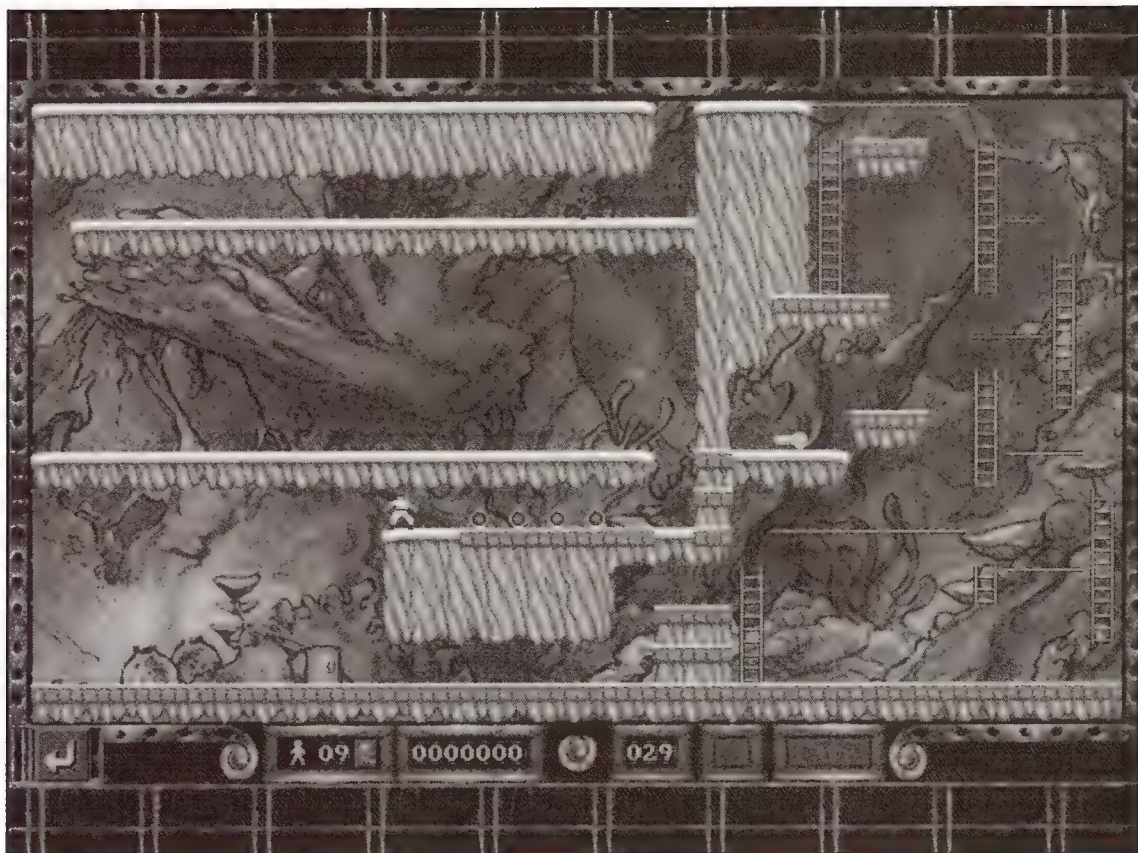
LEVEL 28

LEVEL 28

I still really despise this cavern. It's loaded with nasty associations. It's as close to a house of mirrors as I've come on my quest, and all I can think of is that some sick evil genius concocted these sinuous paths. Suddenly I feel like I'm really working for my money. And to make matters worse, half the surfaces are coated with turf tar!

1. With a mad monk a few steps to the west, I make a quick jab for the small bomb and gold coin with the thought that I'll only come this way once. I then run to a fungus tuft and set a small bomb at its base. To get safely away from the blast, I have to run back to the edge of the bedrock until I come face to face with the malodorous foul presence of my adversary. Thankful that the fuse isn't too long, I then race east to pick up another small bomb and gold coin and fall through a trap-door turf square.

2. With luck on my side so far, I land clutching a jungle beam and traverse east to the high end of a long ladder, where I then clasp a second beam and cross east to a ledge. I hook the small bomb on my belt, then decide that I want to use it where I found it. When I jump off the ledge to avoid the blast, I notice the red monk on the other side of the partition jump west also and fall through trap-door turf to the cavern floor. At this point I understand that the cavern floor is to be avoided, not just because tar turf covers it, but because there's no way to get back up. Noting this, I jump through the blast opening into the large chamber formerly occupied by the monk.
3. At the base of the chamber, next to the foot of a painter's ladder, I find a key that belongs to the vault door on the tier above. At the same time, a gray exit door materializes along the western boundary, ensconced behind a thick barrier of fungus. After taking the gold coins, I plant a small bomb at the base of the fungus enclosure just to see if I can make a speedy exit. The blast creates an interesting but impassable chain reaction. Even as the fungus enclosure regenerates, I can't stand on solid ground long enough to enter the key door. Clearly, I'll have to try my luck with the gray exit door on the other side.
4. I traverse west across the lowest of three jungle beams and land at the head of a painter's ladder. A monk guard becomes alerted to my presence and comes down to investigate. With my laser blaster, I fire at the fungus tuft and slide down a notch on the painter's ladder, then fire a trap pit. The monk falls sidelong into the pit, and I hop overhead, taking the small bomb with me. I climb several ladders until noticing a very thin turf ledge with a jungle beam below it. At regular intervals, small bombs are embedded in the turf. A laser blast just east of the ladder reveals one, which I add to my inventory.
5. Running west across the turf ledge, I scoop up a small bomb and then climb up a painter's ladder. I then make six or seven steps into the tar turf and set the small bomb next to the turf barrier guarding the gray exit door. Backtracking swiftly, I get beyond the bomb's blast and then hurry toward the exit door before the turf regrowth can trap me.



LEVEL 29

Gardening Tip

TIPS
TIPS
TIPS

This is an extremely tricky maneuver. It might become necessary to use three bombs instead of two because the inner layer may grow back before the outer layer does. Planting a third small bomb a little closer than the second one solves the problem, but it's awfully difficult getting the timing right here.

LEVEL 29

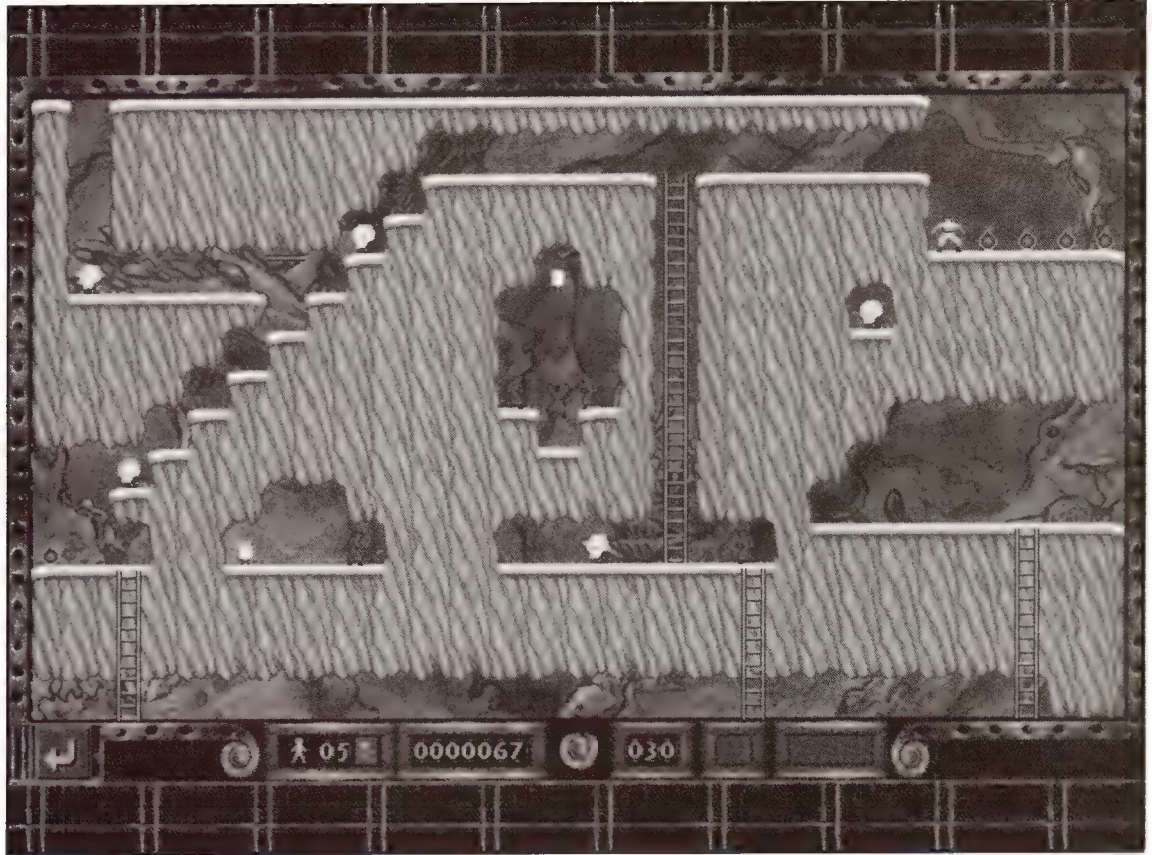
Don't let the fourteenth fungus delving fool you: it isn't nearly as difficult to navigate as the previous one, although appearances might seem otherwise. There isn't much gold to take, but that's not the major objective. Trying to exit through the key door without getting clobbered by the mad monks poses the biggest challenge.

1. I charge east across the turf ledge and pick up the four small bombs. Two red monks make the switchback from above. I plan to blast an exit hole through the turf patch, but I want to time it so that the first mad monk gets crunched in the regrowth. Just as he touches down on the ledge overhead, I fire a single blast at the turf, then make my getaway into the next chamber. I clamber up the ladders and jungle beams, and by the time I reach the second level, I hear him get munched like Doritos in salsa.
2. Zigzagging to the top, I descend several ladders to a ledge, then hop over the western lip to the ledge below, which contains the “luck-of-the-Irish” key. Pocketing it, I blast an escape hole through the ledge and drop to the level below.
3. Dropping down from the square ledge of bedrock, I find a single monk in the vicinity. I approach him, fake a handshake, then drop a small bomb instead and flatten myself against the ledge to escape the blast. The heat from the explosion sears the back of my shirt, but the hissing of more fuses concerns me even more. I inadvertently set off a chain reaction inside the ledge, so I blaze west and get a big nudge from behind from the force of the blast. Fortunately the key fits the keyhole, but as I sail through the exit door, I realize I’ll have to keep this shirt as a constant reminder.

LEVEL 30

Thick layers of turf, irregularly shaped chambers, smarter and more aggressive monks, and a couple of other design surprises characterize the final delving in the fungus series. As before, patience and method help me get through this adventure intact, but I also learn that conserving small bombs and using the laser blaster whenever possible serve me far better in the long run and help me get through some of the worst snafus I’ve ever encountered.

1. I emerge on a northeastern ledge in perfect isolation. Four small bombs, the most I can carry at one time, hang from my belt on the

**LEVEL 30**

four vacant hooks. Starting at the western corner of the ledge, I employ the descending series method of four in order to get through the four layers of fungus. I notice this fungus grows back at an accelerated rate, so I work quickly to get through to the ledge below.

2. Finding nothing of interest on the turf terrace below, I scale down the painter's ladder to the cavern floor. The bottom of the cavern has no turf or bedrock of any kind. Though I have four bombs on me, this fact makes me a little edgy so I quickly move west in the direction of the next painter's ladder. A red monk begins a rapid descent from a ladder above as I begin my ascent, but before it becomes a problem, he sidesteps to the west and falls through trap-door turf. This means it will be impossible for me to get to the golden skull inside the middle chamber from the ladder. I make a

mental note of its location and continue climbing up the central long ladder.

3. The central long ladder divides the upper turf tier into two sections. According to my map, a golden death's-head lies deep in the heart of the turf. With the ladder at my back, I could forego the typical descending series and just create a broad shaft four turf-squares wide. It takes time, but I reach the skull nonetheless and beat a hasty exit, for the turf regenerates at an extraordinary pace.
4. While in the neighborhood, I begin work on getting the gold coin at the apex of the eastern chamber. The chamber looks like a cathedral arch, but I can assure you that the architect who planned it did not rely on divine inspiration. From the top, three turf-squares west of the central long ladder, I cut two layers into the turf. To create an exit for my drop, I plant a small bomb on a rung roughly level with the teeming monk flesh inside. The bomb blows away the east wall of the cathedral arch, and I descend through the pinnacle opening. I land on a mad monk's head, then sidestep to the west.
5. But wait! I still have to get the golden skull in the chamber below without falling through the trap-door turf. I set a small bomb on the high step of the blown-out wall and slip out of range. The blast creates a nice access tunnel downward, and with a single discharge from the laser pistol, I drop to the chamber and snatch up the golden death's-head.
6. Falling through the shaft to the cavern floor, I quickly head up the painter's ladder to the second tier and then up the central long ladder. From the head of the ladder, I run west toward the head of the Aztec steps. The fungus overgrowth makes passage difficult, so I hammer away at the steps with my laser pistol. I grab the first golden skull off the second step, but several squares down I have to traverse the hand-over-hand bar to retrieve the second golden skull. At the bottom, I take the third golden skull and hook the small bomb on my belt.

CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTION

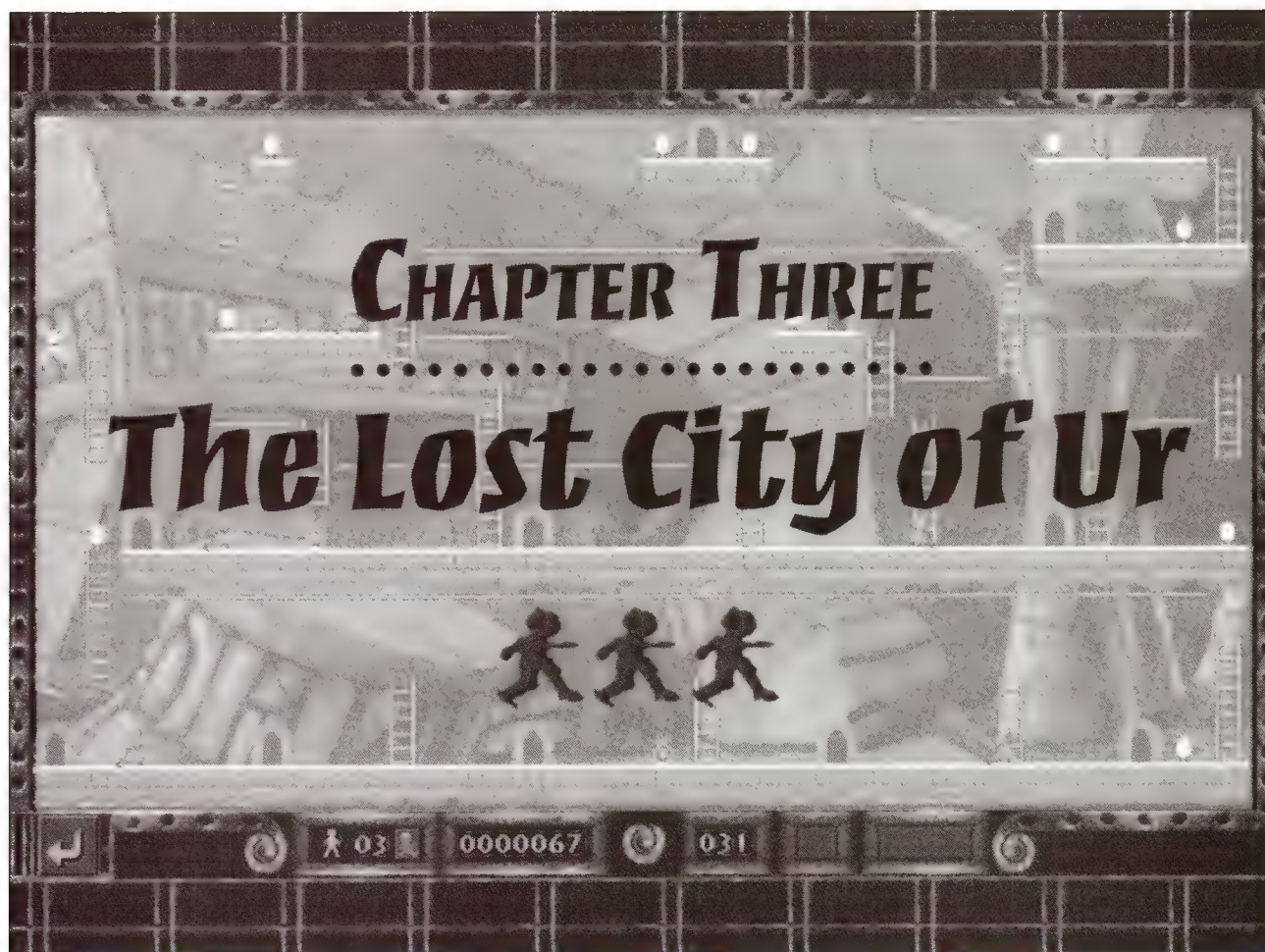
Red Alert

In this cavern, I have to be especially careful not to let the mad monk into the chamber at the foot of the Aztec steps. To conserve small bombs, I draw him into a nearby turf pit of my own making.

7. The last gold coin sits in the small chamber just east. A single monk-guard programmed for destruction occupies that chamber. I position a small bomb in the nook just to the right of the painter's ladder. Curious by the sound I make, he presses his ear to the blast. The bomb doesn't kill him, but it does make an opening. Thinking quickly, I fire a turf-pit next to the ladder. He falls into it, leaving me to snatch the gold coin. Then the heavenly chimes sound, and the gray exit door emerges—in the cathedral arch, of all places!
8. Undaunted, I climb up the central long ladder. From the top, I carve a vertical shaft along the eastern flank of the arch. When I become almost level with the monks, I plant a small bomb on the ledge. The blast obliterates two of the four, although two still remain in the cathedral arch. A second bomb finishes them long enough for me to climb through the ceiling of the arch and dive to safety.

CONCLUSION

That ends my journeys through the fungus delvings. According to my Evil Empire atlas, I will soon enter the Lost City of Ur, the famous Mesopotamian capital, which fell into obscurity hundreds of years before the birth of Christ. Now I will see it and the treasures it contains for me!



In addition to teaching high-school geometry, I've also dabbled in archaeology. Imagine my excitement, then, when I discover the Lost City of Ur. That ancient Sumerian capital and religious center, which the Bible identifies as the birthplace of Abraham, stands in glorious ruins right in the heart of downtown Mesopotamia.

What an irony of history, if not of fate, that the Evil Empire should hide its cache of modern world wealth in an ancient lost city that, in its day, was perhaps the wealthiest in the civilized world. Amid crumbling columns, mausoleums, and the eroded interior of ancient ziggurats, I raided the third kingdom of the Evil Empire. Untarnished gold treasure stands in striking contrast to the toppled columns and collapsed roofs of the city ruins. Perhaps, when time permits and we rid the world once and for all of the mad monk infestation, I will pay another visit.

In addition to my trusty laser blaster and small bombs, I find a third useful feature: the hideouts. In critical moments, I retreat into shadowy alcoves, concealing myself completely from the evil monk priests, who roam the halls in great numbers. I could remain in the hideouts indefinitely. To help pass the time, I try to read the cuneiform graffiti. A bit rusty, my cuneiform.

Historical Note

NOTE
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NOTE

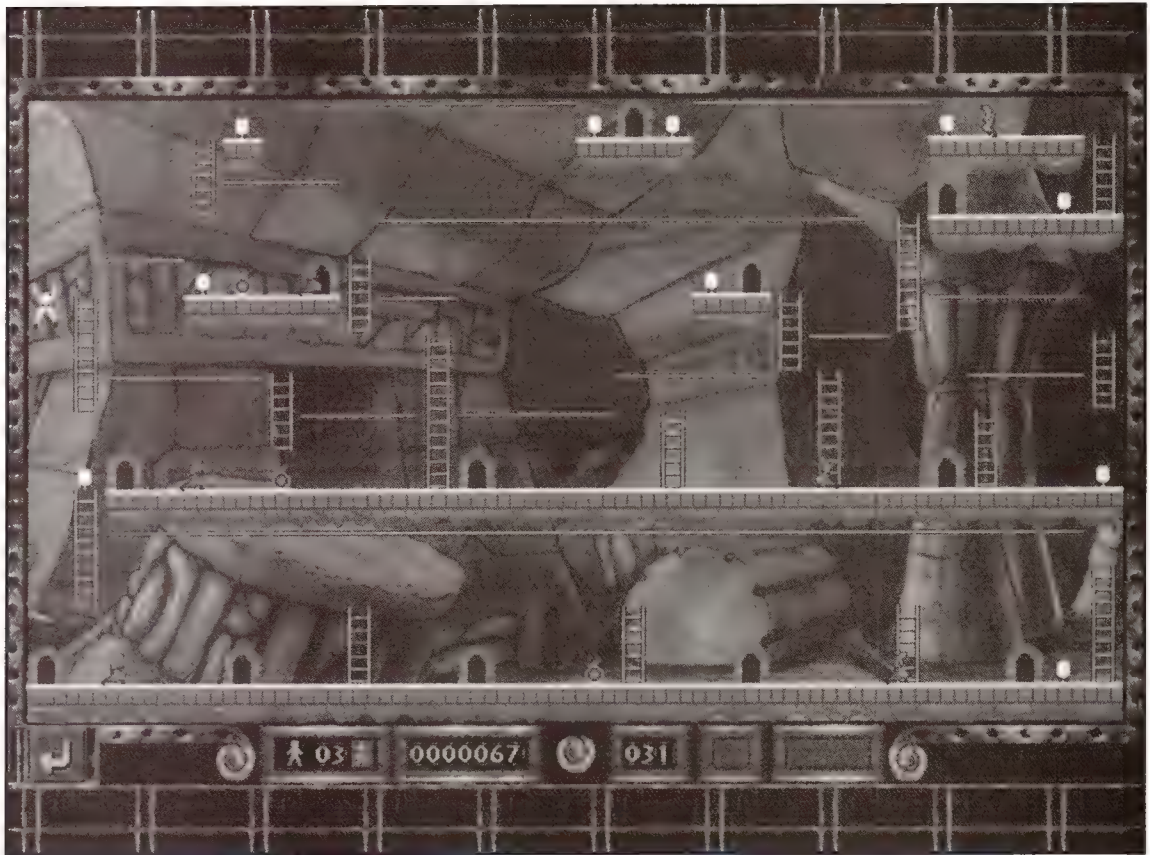
Modern biblical scholars believe that before 5000 B.C., a massive flood destroyed the Lost City of Ur. That event then became the foundation of the story retold in Genesis. Thousands of years later, the Sumerians established the first dynasty of Ur. During that epoch, they erected the stupendous Royal Tombs bedecked with glorious treasures of gold, silver, and semiprecious stones. Important persons of that era were buried in these tombs.

The city was first discovered in 1852 less than 200 miles away from Baghdad and about nine miles from the Euphrates River. From 1922 to 1934, Sir Leonard Woolley discovered, among other revealing details, that these regal mausoleums also contained the retinues of servants, ceremonial carts, animals, furniture, and utensils.

Scores of cultures have occupied this ancient city through the ages, establishing dynasties and erecting magnificent architectural wonders, the likes of which the world never saw again until Athens and Rome. It always remained an important religious center—many religions have occupied its temples—until the city declined and was abandoned during the fourth century B.C., when it is believed that the Euphrates had migrated too far to support the city's irrigation system.

LEVEL 31

The lost kingdom of Ur gives me a spooky impression. Edgar Allan Poe could have written a story about it. It feels cavernous—if not downright cadaverous. It's not as damp as the first two worlds, but chilly drafts keep the temperature uncomfortably low. As I get past the first cavern, however, I begin to feel more at ease. I take the laser blaster out of my holster and click on the safety. It would be useless against the bedrock. Instead, I get a rapid education in using the hideouts.



LEVEL 31

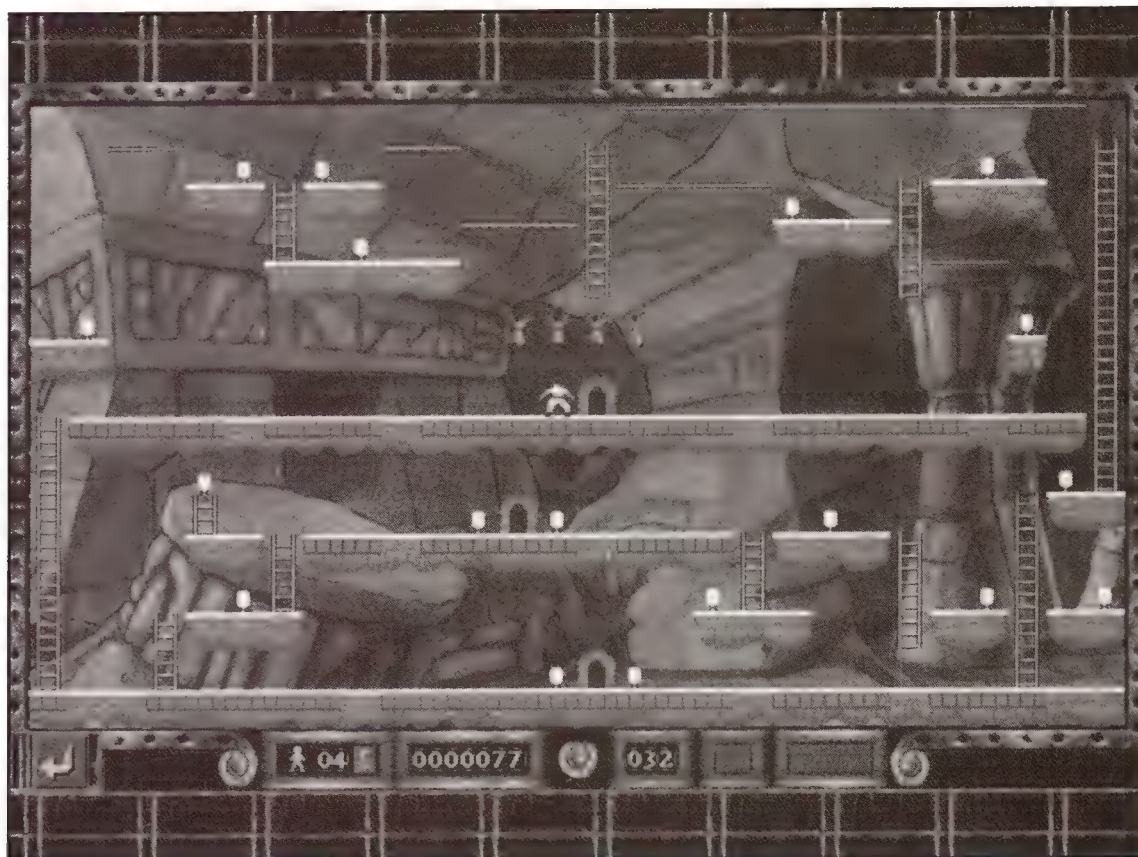
City Guide

TIPS TIPS TIPS

Hiding sometimes stretches the limits of my patience. These monks could orbit around my hiding place endlessly. I develop a technique, however, of teasing them by stepping out into the open for an instant, then withdrawing into my hideout again. Sometimes I do it several times in a row. By doing so, I can nudge them toward another part of the cavern at crucial moments so that I can resume my dirty work. Stepping in and out becomes a subtle kind of baiting that works very effectively.

1. I plunge from the top of the cavern to its bedrock floor. A mad monk patrols nearby, so I slip inside a hideout. There are two monks on duty down here. As soon as they wander east, I dash for the first painter's ladder, climb up and hop over the first monk's head. In the process, I pick up a small bomb and a gold coin. I then run to the second ladder. Before he reaches me, I hop over his head and make for the eastern painter's ladder.

2. The other four monks come down to investigate, so I deftly tuck into the southeastern hideout. I see my chance as they drift down from the suspended ladder, for all of them are now stuck on the cavern floor. Quickly, I scale the eastern painter's ladder and traverse west on the parallel beam. After I reach the suspended ladder, I run east across the bedrock tier. They follow the same and only path, which means that they fall way behind.
3. The worst seems behind me, the gold, before me. Gold coins occupy the top third of the cavern. I focus on the eastern side first, zigzagging up a series of painter's ladders and jungle beams until I reach the top beam. Near the middle, I drop down to a bedrock ledge. From there, I contemplate my next move as the squadron of mad monks takes to the ladders.
4. I decide it's best to draw the monks to the eastern side to free up the central and western sides for plundering. I wait until I can't bear their stench a moment longer, then dash up the switchback again. Some try going up the central system of ladders and beams, but there's no connection between it and the eastern system, so I assumed the advantage. At the top, I cross west via the hand-over-hand bar, then make a tight loop in the northwestern corner, sailing down to the longer ledge below. I grab what I think is the last gold coin, but I don't hear any heavenly bells. One gold coin remains—in the southeastern corner of the cavern!
5. I hate backtracking, but sometimes it's inevitable. These monks pocket change and then put it elsewhere just to foil my efforts. But I'm determined to finish the job, so I sail downward along the same route I followed at the very beginning, along the western vertical corridor. As soon as the sextet catches wind of this, they drop again to the cavern floor.
6. Before they reach me, I pilfer the last gold coin and hear the heavenly chimes. The gray exit door appears in the northwestern corner. I bait the monks a second time. Once they fall to the cavern floor, I scale up the eastern painter's ladder and sprint west along the jungle beam while they founder. On the bedrock tier, I run east to the first ladder within reach. This leads upward to the new gleaming long ladders that materialize along the western border, and I shoot up to the cyan light.



LEVEL 32

LEVEL 32

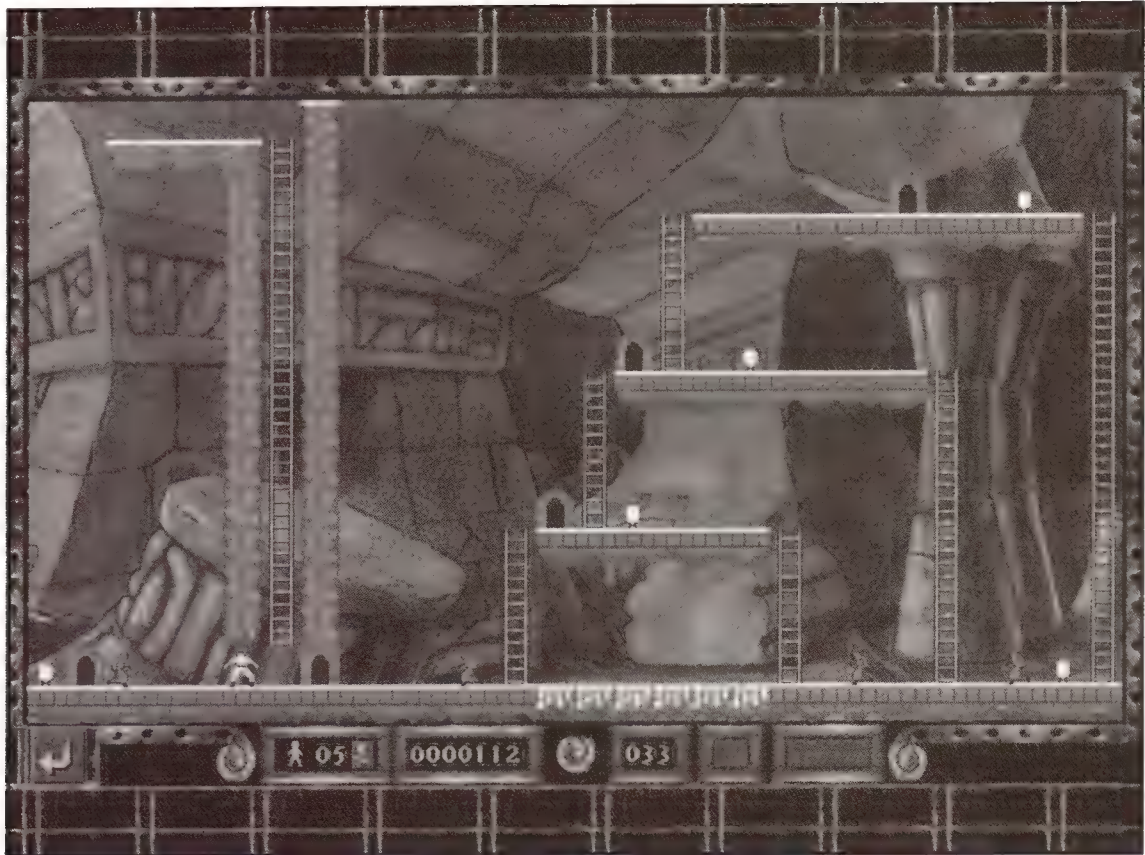
The next cavern reminds me of a Broadway show tune: four mad monks stand poised like dancers in *West Side Story*, although their intent is something less than musical. Gold coins fill the lost city in difficult-to-reach places, but with cunning and determination, I prove my physical prowess.

1. I slip into the shadows of the nearest hideout and let the four ballerinas head for the eastern long ladder. When I emerge, I identify a patch of turf and blast an exit hole to the large chamber below. With my rucksack open, I sprint east along a bedrock terrace, broken here and there by openings for ladders. The mad monks drop through the eastern entrance.

2. The bedrock terrace drops down to two lower ledges split in two by a ladder—the very one the monks are using to come get me! It's close, but I snatch the far gold coin, then double back west along the cavern floor. Meanwhile, the cash register keeps pinging.
3. As the monks pursue me below, one drops a gold coin. I halt, waiting for them to follow me up to my level. At the right moment, I jump down and pinch the errant coin. It's risky because, if I don't time it right, the monks can surround me from both sides and reduce me to hamburger meat. But I want to get this last coin before moving to the upper part of the cavern, since it will be more difficult to come back later. So rather than just race ahead, at times I have to lure them down the same route. I wait for them at the base of the western ladder, then clamber up to the large upper chamber.
4. I speed east along the terrace, then rocket up a system of ladders to the top of the cavern. From the eastern long ladder, I seize hold of the rooftop jungle beam and traverse west, prospecting amid bedrock ledges and a smaller ledge that looks like an upside-down army helmet.
5. The eastern long ladder and roof beam allow me to purloin the gold on the western side of the cavern. A hand-over-hand beam links to a couple of suspended ledges there, so I follow them and initiate my sweep. The last gold piece sets off the gray exit door alarm. Since I'm in the immediate vicinity, I simply have to climb from a western ledge to the pearly gloss of the transporter.

LEVEL 33

Just when I think I've left that turf tar once and for all, I find a large pool of it in the center of the third cavern of Ur. And spanning above is a high dive, the likes of which I haven't seen since the Empire canceled the Olympic Games. Bedrock tiers bordered by ladders rise like a series of Chinese boxes on the other side of the cavern. The difficult challenge: stealing the gold back from the kleptomaniac monks.

**LEVEL 33**

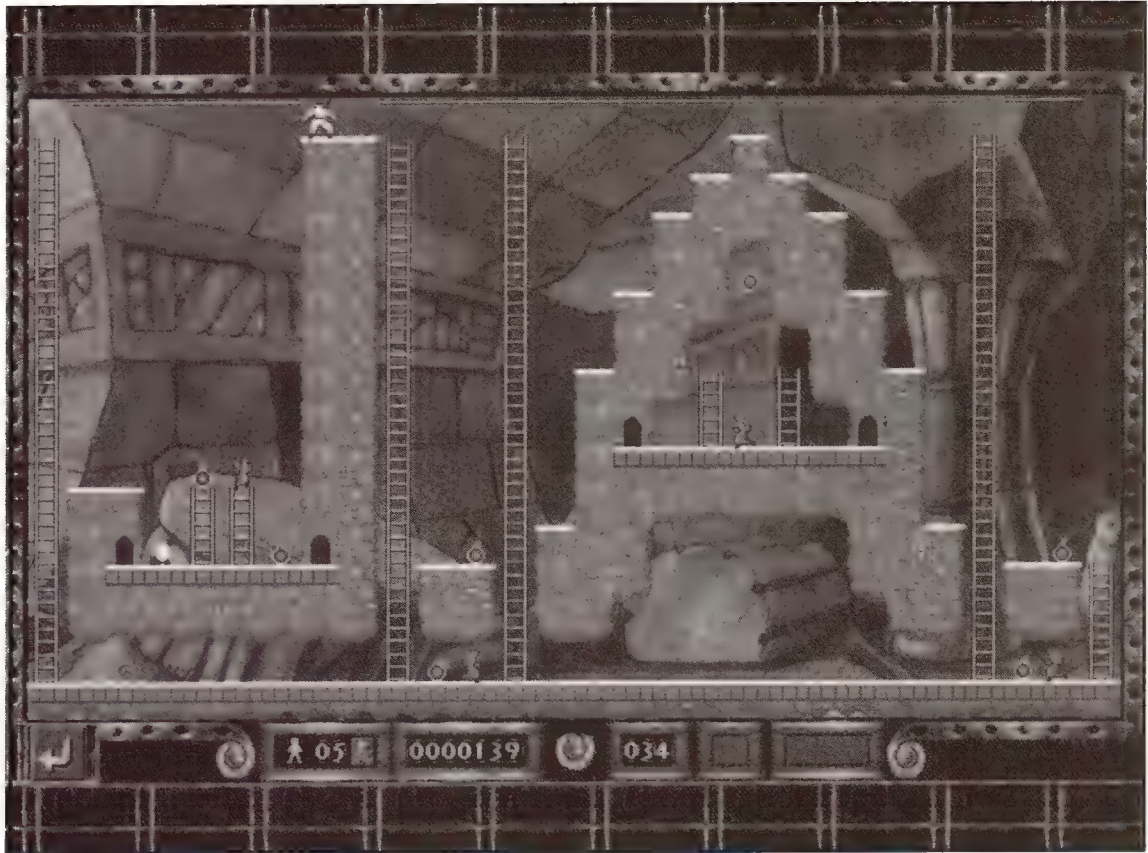
1. In every level so far, hideouts have meant the difference between safety and a thorough lashing. This cavern sustains the rule. By taking just three steps, I crouch into the closest one. I wait for one monk to join his fiendish comrades on the orange turf tar so that I can rob the gleaming gold coin in the southwest corner. As soon as he gets stuck in the turf tar, I make a dash for the gold token. Groans of protest come from two monks exerting themselves in the toxic spillage. With momentum in my favor, I make for the nearest painter's ladder.
2. With regular precision, I thresh my way through three box tiers filled with gold coins. It isn't all that easy, actually, since I have a few narrow scrapes with the monks. But by now they're in such a quandary that they can't keep focused on me for long. Each of the box tiers contains a hideout, and since they seem like they're closing in on me, I stash away in the top one and wait for trouble to pass.

3. I wait a long time, no exaggeration, but decide I have to make a move sometime. Damn the torpedoes! As they cluster at the base of the painter's ladder between the second and third box tiers, I dash west, sail down, and hop over two heads in tandem! Those poor fools don't know what hit them. And, of course, how can I overlook the last gold coin situated just on the western edge of the turf tar? It's crying out to me, "Take me! Take me please!" Always happy to oblige, I perform my civic duty by dislodging the last gold coin from the third cavern of Ur.
4. The angels break forth, and the gray exit door materializes. To get to it, I either have to practice my double pike, or maybe a cannonball would do quite nicely. I scale the ladder and fire my turf toaster at a turf square just one east from the edge, drop through, and with the wind whistling in my ears wonder, "What would Greg Louganis do if he saw me now?"

LEVEL 34

This next cavern, the fourth in the Urban series, reminds me a lot of Amsterdam. The brick looks identical, and on the eastern side I see a gabled, 17th-century facade. Only the monks bring me back to the urgency of the moment. Outwitting them requires patient investigation of hidden gold coins and concealed small bombs. The key to finding the buried treasure in this lost city, as well as circumventing the monk sentries, requires an expert's understanding of turf mechanics.

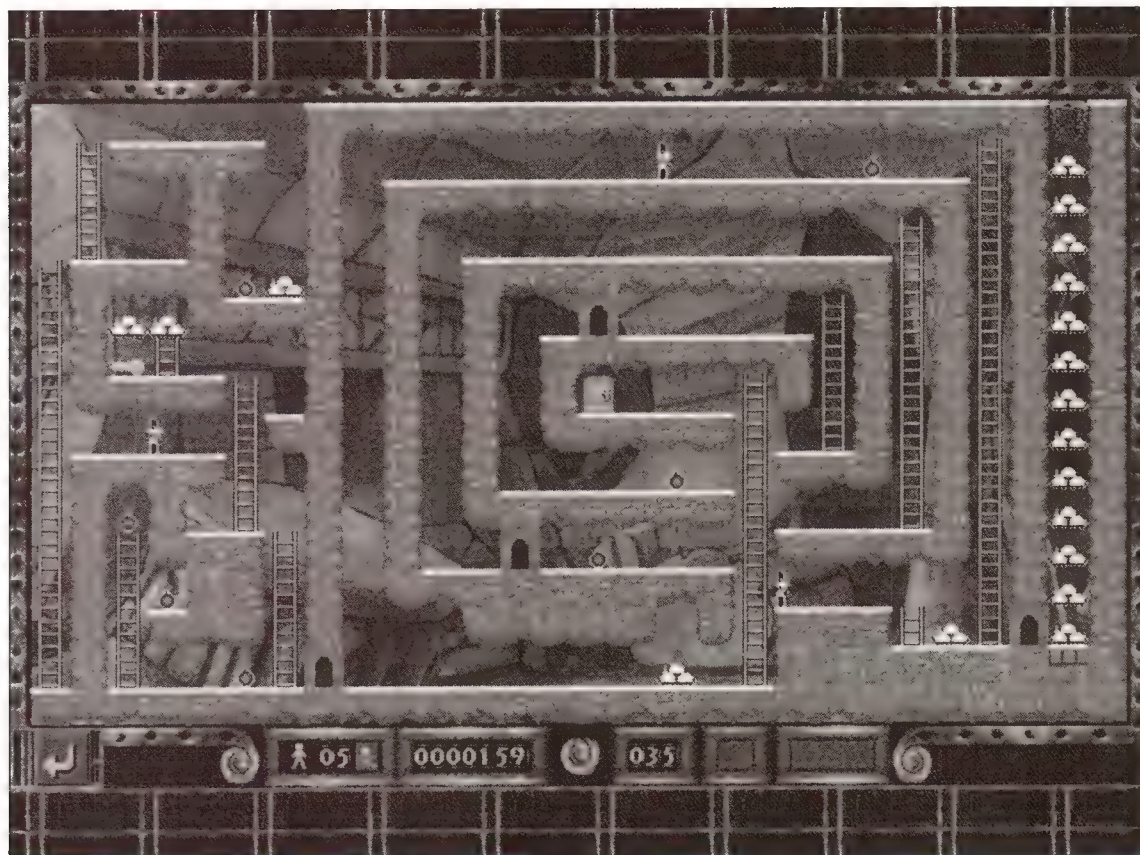
1. I begin my hunt from atop a tall brick parapet. A single blast reveals a small bomb. I hook it on my belt, then sidestep east to the first of two central long ladders. I want to cross the hand-over-hand beam to the western boundary, but wait until the brick grows back. The wait makes me nervous, especially as a *rover monk*—one who doesn't have a specific assignment to guard a limited area—climbs up the second long ladder. The brick rejuvenates just in time as I cross westward. I then halt over a much smaller tower on the western boundary. Releasing my grip, I alight on the roof of the small tower.

**LEVEL 34**

2. From this lower perspective, I overlook a courtyard that must have been charming in its day, but now looks wasted from neglect. The *monk sentry*—a guard ordered to protect a limited area—doesn't improve the sight much, but I do spot the gleam of a burnished gold coin. I mow the tower level with the courtyard, then bait the monk sentry past the hideout to the western long ladder. I draw him upward until the brick turf reproduces again, at which I point I whistle past the dumbfounded demon back to the small tower's rooftop.
3. The monk sentry absconded with the courtyard coin, so I prepare a trap for him on the small tower's roof. After the monk falls into the pit, the gold coin goes spinning up into the air, and I transfer it to the rucksack. I expected him to follow me down into the courtyard, but fortunately he doesn't. Evasion would be difficult within this open-air enclosure. Instead, he remains on the western long ladder

just level with me. I don't like him being there, and since there are two more small bombs at hand, I plant one in the arch of the hide-out, then run clear of the blast.

4. Any other antagonist would have been obliterated in the blast, but instead the courtyard monk reincarnates directly overhead. I take advantage of the delay to make my escape through the half crater. The monk falls into the empty courtyard as I scamper up the western long ladder and traverse east along the rooftop jungle beam. Two monk rovers make a beeline up the first central long ladder, but I don't stop my crossing until I reach a position over a small brick ledge below, sandwiched between the two long ladders. I let go of the bar and drop to that surface. The monks come down after me, but I set a small bomb surprise on the western corner of the ledge.
5. The blast takes care of the rovers and also reveals three shiny gold coins. I have just enough time to sweep them into my sack before the monks descend upon me again. I have trouble shaking them off my trail, so I set yet another small bomb on the cavern floor near the foot of the first central long ladder. This time, they materialize farther away, providing me ample time to find the fourth gold coin hidden in the untouched turf square. The first blast clears the ledge of only three, not all four turf squares. Thankfully, I don't overlook it. Since I don't want to waste another small bomb, two blasts from my turf toaster make the necessary vertical incision.
6. Continuing my eastern sweep of the Dutch cavern, I forsake the gabled house and target the other small ledge identical to the one I just scoured. With only one rover in pursuit, I have a bit more time to pry open its contents. I discover a small bomb and place it adjacent to the foot of the eastern long ladder. The blast disposes of the rover monk and allows me to clean up the remaining gold coins.
7. I round up the first gold coins, then torch through the western side of the lower ledge to retrieve the last two. This completes my excavation of the fourth Urban cavern and signals the arrival of the gray exit door, which materializes in the northeastern corner of the cavern. The eastern painter's ladder instantly sprouts into a long ladder. No monks block my way, and I make an easy getaway.



LEVEL 35

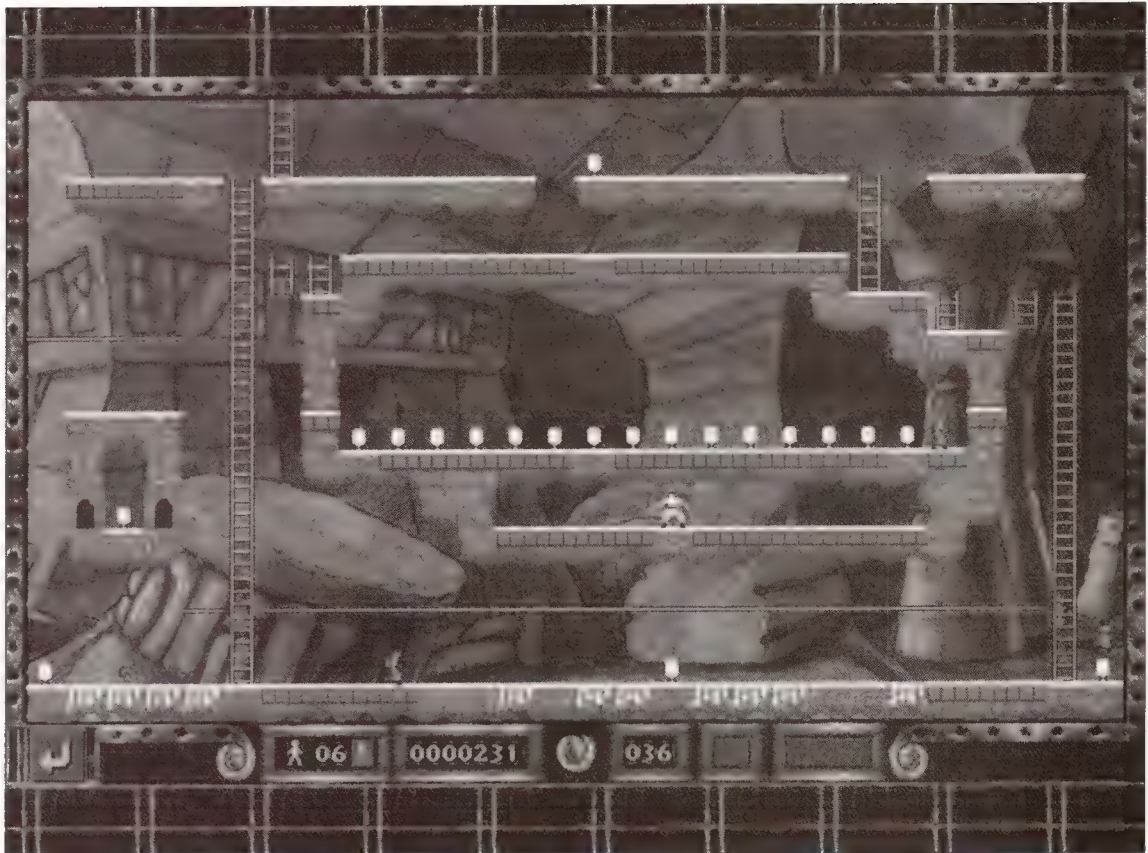
LEVEL 35

I enter the fifth Urban cavern by dropping down through a vertical shaft filled with golden ingots. This kind of debut always sets me in a fabulous mood. From the southeastern corner, I survey the surroundings. Concentric squares take up three-quarters of the cavern. The western quarter consists of a patchy array of brick ledges and partitions. The square spiral reminds me of a sort of boxy Milky Way as designed by Volvo—safe, rugged, and sturdy, but lacking in contour. But enough of my random associations and on with the tour.

1. A few steps to the west, I toast a turf-pit cushioned between both ladders. I time the blast right at the pinnacle of the mad monk's descent. By the time he falls in, he doesn't have enough time to climb out again to pursue me. I hear the sound of monk meat crushing in

the regrowth, but by then I've already scaled the ladder. Two monks try to find me somewhere in the interior of the Volvo Milky Way—alas, in futility. I blast a clean hole through the brick turf and enter the vortex.

2. My next move seems obvious: with two monks on a long ladder on the eastern side, I should drop down the shaft on the western side. I sprint east along the tier. The monk pair plans to intercept me. But before they can, I blast an escape hole directly above a stack of gold bars. With well-oiled ease, I slip through the exit hole and pounce on the gold.
3. I run west along the cavern floor toward the western quarter with two angry monks tailing behind. I ascend the first painter's ladder that appears, then climb a second just a notch west. The other two monks return to the boxy spiral, but I have a new foe and a new gold target. At the top, I find a small cache of gold ingots and a green key. I take them all, but I also prepare a snare for the monk who patrols this area. After he falls in, I hop overhead.
4. Safely past the three monks, I continue my drive up the western long ladder to a small overhang. Beneath the overhang, I find more ingots and a small bomb. Although I enjoy the luxury of extra munitions, so far I don't see a real need to set off any of them. There's always the risk that a monk can reincarnate nearby and pose a sudden, unexpected threat, especially in these tight quarters. I take the small bomb for possible future use, and with my laser blaster vacate an exit through the brick turf.
5. I've been a little overoptimistic about overcoming the monks. They closely defend the green key door, making access a problem. Gently, I manipulate them down to the cavern floor, always maintaining the advantage. With three consecutive blasts, they fall like dominoes into the laser crater—but they're fast and wily. Just as the third monk falls in, the first intimates that he wants to get out and throttle my neck, so I have to dash overhead in haste. Once they're behind me, I make it to the vault door easily enough and dive into the blue sparkling curtain.



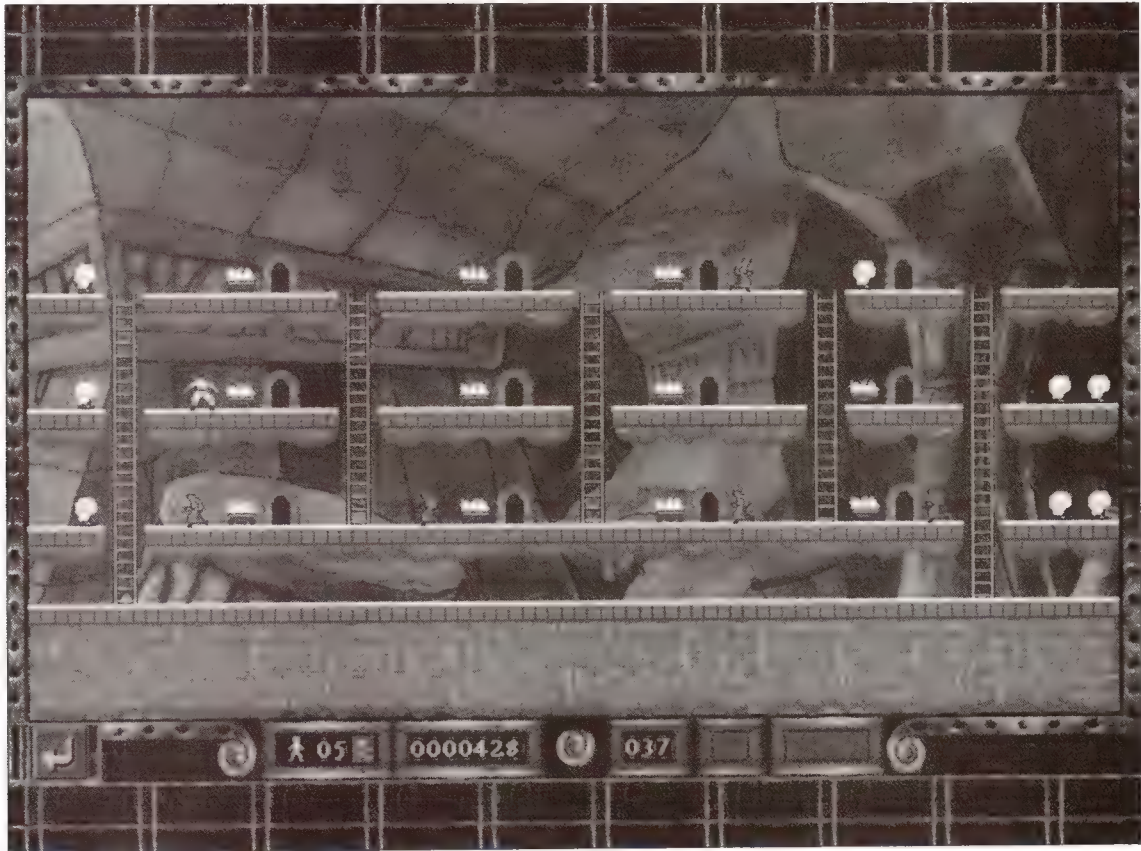
LEVEL 36

LEVEL 36

Next, I emerge inside a wide, low-ceilinged chamber. It's completely barren. Aside from several gold coins on the cavern floor, most of the loot lines the large chamber overhead. Taking the roundabout route, I have to detour around two monks assigned to floor duty and another mad monk sentry. After a thorough examination of the cavern's apparatus, I execute my invasion of the sixth Urban complex.

1. Since I stand on the only patch of turf in the chamber, I step back and blast an exit hole. I jump through the gap and land clutching the hand-over-hand bar below. One monk slogs through the turf tar, while a second approaches from the east long ladder across the jungle beam. I lure him to a midway point, then release my grip. Both monks now stand ankle-deep in the orange goop, exactly as I wished.

2. I could snatch the gold coin in the southwestern corner, but it seems more advantageous to cross east via the parallel beam. The monks struggle to get toward me as I pilfer a gold coin and then clamber up the eastern long ladder. I then run west over a small landing, scale a painter's ladder, and make for the top turf tier.
3. A gap separates both tiers. I assume that I can grab the gold coin at the western edge of the eastern tier and then hop down to the chamber roof. Instead, I fall through two levels of trap-door turf directly into the chamber. The gold coins cover the floor of the chamber as if they're growing there from plants. The monk sentry moves in for the attack. Calmly, I lay a turf-pit trap and wait for him to fall in while I clean up the western portion of the chamber. By the time I come back, he stands in a pit with a gold coin dangling overhead. I snatch it and bound overhead.
4. With no time to lose, I blow out an escape hatch in the eastern corner and slip through the hole. This leads me back to the small wide chamber where I began this tour of duty. I know the location of the bare turf from before and torch another exit hole. Dropping through it, I land on the parallel beam but this time head west with the monks trailing behind.
5. I climb up the western long ladder, then up a painter's ladder that leads to a short beam. Crossing the beam west, I drop down to a ledge. The ledge leads to a second longer beam, which in turn leads to the roof of a small chapel. I blast an entry hole in the center of it and seize the gold coin there. I then leap past the western hideout and drop down to the cavern floor. I remember the gold coin in the southwestern corner from the start of my tour. With the monks a safe distance now, I take it without fear of reprisal.
6. I strain through the turf tar toward the base of the western long ladder, then hang motionless on the western tip of the jungle beam, drawing both monks to a midpoint again over the turf tar. When they get that far, I drop and they follow suit. I only have to back up a few steps to make it to the western long ladder and then pass overhead via the hand-over-hand bar. One of the monks, perhaps in nervous exasperation, leaves a gold coin behind in the muck. I dip down and pack it away in the rucksack, stretching with each step

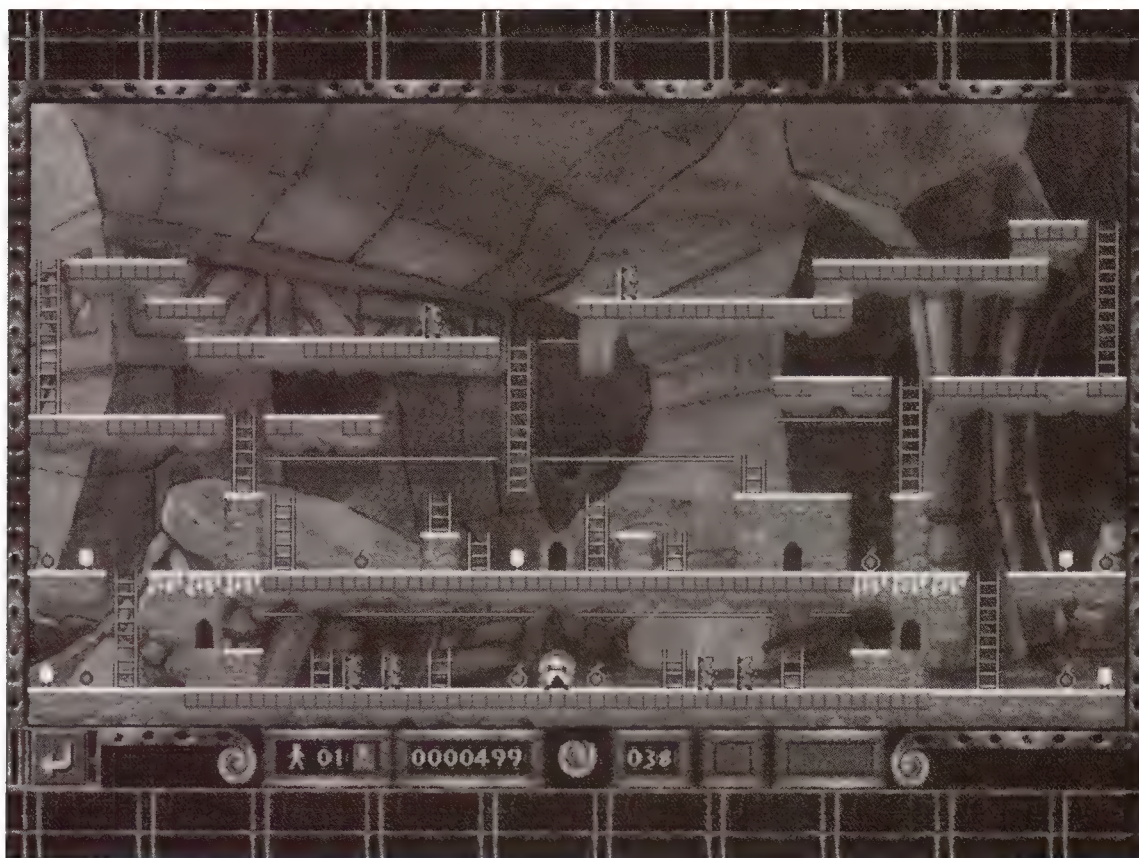
**LEVEL 37**

through the orange slime until I reach the eastern long ladder. When the gray exit door appears in the northeastern corner, I climb up to it, safely beyond the clutches of the mad evil monks.

LEVEL 37

The seventh hall of the lost city reminds me of rougher times, when I used to lodge in a motel off the Vegas strip. Replace the ladders with fire escapes, and I swear it's the same structure. Amazing how you can trace the architectural influences of both Amsterdam and Vegas back to a point in time thousands of years ago. The regular cubicles impede my efforts because at any spot I can easily find myself surrounded. There are no small bombs at all, no patches of turf to trap a wayward monk, so that my only means of evasion, other than running, is the network of hideouts dispersed throughout.

1. From the start, it looks doubtful that I can surpass the five monks. They move like a pack of wolves. I duck into a hideout and wait for them to move out of the area. This gives me a chance to survey the area. I decide to start with the western half. The cavern floor looks like an obvious trap. With only two exits, it would be easy to fall into a trap. Clearly, I'll have to stay away from there and just use the hideouts if it becomes too risky. When the monks group in the north-eastern corner of Motel Urban, I make my play.
2. Counting on speed, I gather up treasure chests in the central rooms. I work down as far as the bottom story of the motel, prudently avoiding the cavern floor, and then loop up to the northwestern tier. There I find an assortment of golden skulls, but I also note that the monk pack has gotten a head start on the looting. Without a means of trapping them in the turf, I'll have to wait for them to drop whatever gold they're carrying. As soon as they begin to swarm around, I sneak into a hideout on the top floor.
3. I wait a long time for them to finally gather in the southwestern corner. One of them leaves behind a treasure chest on the middle story. Thinking I won't be returning soon, if ever, I stash the treasure chest before they trash me. But then my heart sinks. Just as I think I'm finished with this half of the cavern, another monk drops his treasure chest. I could wait, but I decide to press forward instead. I'll have to come back for it later.
4. My success depends a lot on how I outmaneuver the mad monks. If I stay for too long on any one level, then they push farther east in my direction. I don't want that. I want to keep them for as long as possible on the western flank. So instead of cleaning up an entire row, then moving up a row and tackling it, I make a narrow loop of the inner three, then the outer three. Every time I go up the ladders, the monks either climb or retreat in confusion. So starting from the first story, I'm very quick to loop up to the third without drawing them too close.
5. The faithful brothers keep to their side of the cavern while I finish my eastern sweep of Motel Urban. The skulls fit snugly in my sack alongside the treasure chests. But there's still one left in the hands of the monks, and they closely guard it on their side. With no better option but to wait, I duck into a hideout.

**LEVEL 38**

6. I wait, for what seems like an eternity. The monks cough up another treasure chest, so these two seem like the last ones. When they migrate over to the eastern side just below me, I make a dash for the western side. I capture the treasure easily and the heavenly chimes ring forth: the gray exit door at last. But wait! It appears on the opposite side!
7. I face one last, but by no means unfamiliar hurdle: how to get around the Mongol hordes. I wait in a hideout again until they migrate back west. When they regroup on the lower rows, I sprint for the exit and make out like a bandit.

LEVEL 38

This cavern proves to be the most difficult, at least in recent memory. It doesn't seem that way at first glance, but looking back now, I consider it

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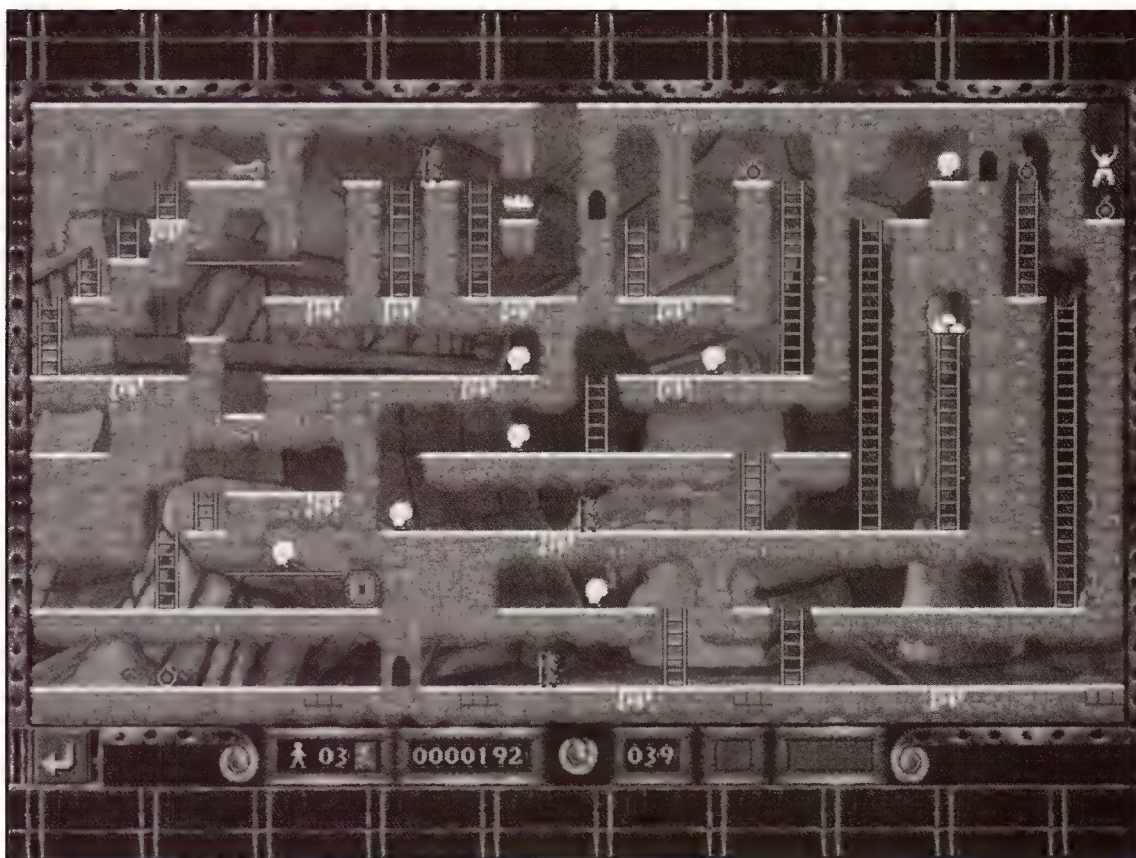
in the top 20. Sure, I encounter caverns later on that demand more from my ingenuity, but here I have to rely on sheer reflexes, timing, and a careful scope of the premises in order to plan my next advance. Running up against six monks does not improve the odds any, either.

1. I drop with a thud on the cavern floor, surrounded by four monks and a hideout directly behind me as my only means of escape. I sweep up the two small bombs on either side of me, then retreat into the hideout. The monks resume their search on the western flank of the chamber. Outnumbered four to one, I see that I'll have to use a small bomb to get past them. I leap out of the alcove, setting a bomb two steps east of it, and press myself against the eastern wall to get as far away from the blast as possible. The four monks are consumed in the flames, freeing me to set a second bomb on the western edge of the chamber so that I can blast through to the outside.
2. I never have a problem finding small bombs. I add two more to my inventory in the southwestern corner, picking up two gold coins in the process. I step through the turf tar to the base of a brick rampart, turn around, and plant a small bomb there. Like a husky straining against a harness, I push with all my might to get beyond the reach of the blast as the turf tar tries to hold me back. The rampart evaporates, and I find yet another small bomb between me and the monks. Fortunately, they stay behind a retaining wall as I step up a ladder to an upper ledge; as soon as I rise above, they charge forward like the light brigade. To hold them back, I detonate a small bomb at the head of the painter's ladder and manage to toast two in the deed.
3. The monks invariably reincarnate from the same point above the cavern, so a blast only puts them off for the briefest interval. I see a gold coin in the center of the viper pit; getting there will prove to be a problem. Running west, I fire a hole in one piece of turf to ward off one attacker, then climb up the western painter's ladder to the top tier. I fire an exit hole through a patch of turf there and jump through. (One of the two mad monks who stand guard inside of the viper pit may make off with the gold coin stashed there. If so, I make my way up the northwestern quadrant, trap the lead monk in a small turf pit, and grab the gold coin as he falls in.)

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4. Now comes the moment of truth. I leap from the ledge to a jungle beam and drop on a step ladder into the viper pit, the area enclosed by two retaining walls. Phew! I then climb out of there via a short painter's ladder and grab hold of the same jungle beam, moving across and over a second rampart and a munitions dump. I spot a narrow gap in between the dump and the rampart, and it sparks an idea. I wait for the lead monk to hover just over the gap, then side-step from the ladder to the tier below. The lead monk sinks down into the narrow enclosure, hopelessly trapped.
 5. The symmetry of the bottom half of the cavern strikes me as I sweep up the two gold coins and small bombs. Cyberspace opens her doors overhead with a sparkling tubular sound familiar by now. As I did on the western flank, I set a small bomb at the base of the eastern rampart. This not only incinerates the trapped monk, but starts a chain reaction in the munitions dump. Monks killed by the succession of blasts begin raining down from the central portal. Before the munitions dump regenerates, I run through the turf tar and the vacant bedrock to the retaining wall. The monks watch my next move. As I plant a small bomb on top of the eastern retaining wall, they begin to climb over the retaining wall while waving their bayonets. The blast intervenes just in time, creating a sufficient diversion so that I can climb up the step ladder to the painter's ladder. Holding my breath so as not to pass out from their stench, I clasp the jungle beam and spring out of the viper's pit.
 6. Once up in the northeastern quadrant, I loop counterclockwise up a group of ladders and ledges until finally diving into the bluish-green sparkling mist that means freedom, more gold, and more mad tactics.

LEVEL 39

After stretching my endurance and reflexes to their maximum, it feels refreshing to exercise a different part of my anatomy: namely, my brain. The labyrinth of the ninth cavern, like the ones in the moss caverns and the fungus delvings, obliges me to remember my path and avoid sudden trap doors as Theseus had once done while hunting the Minotaur.

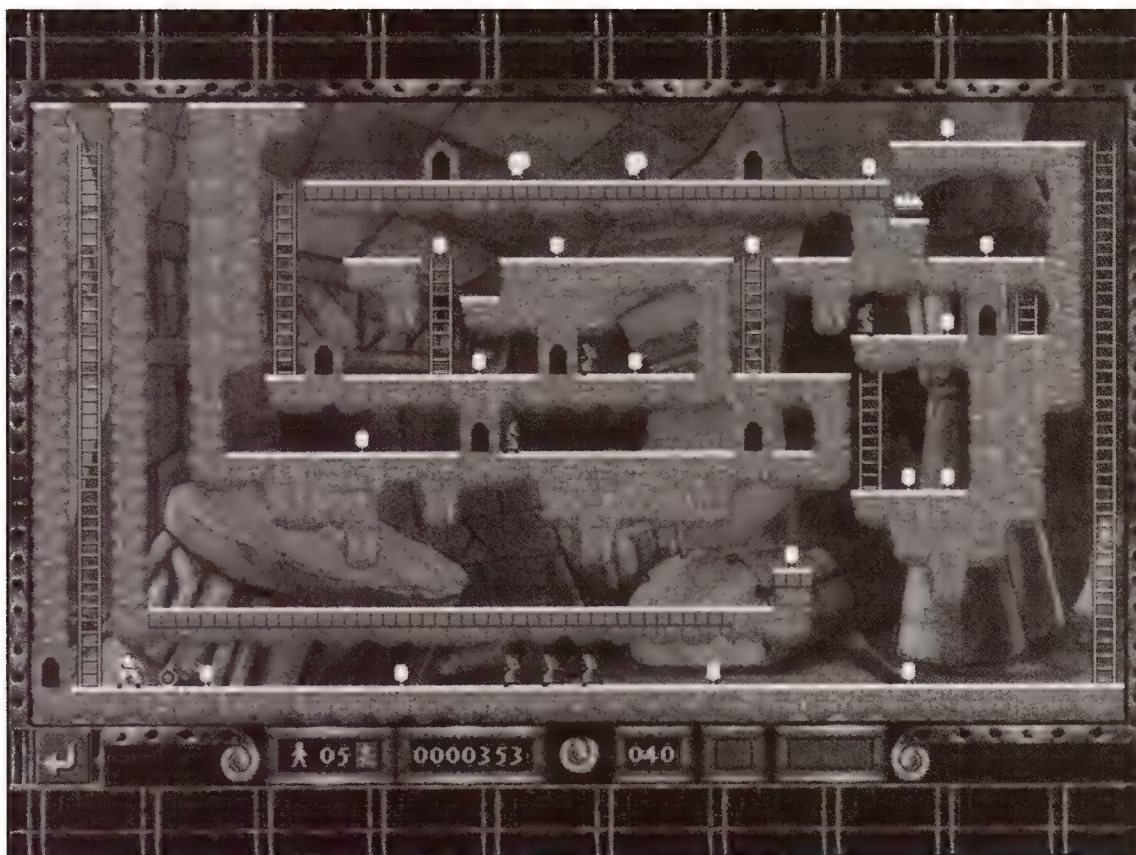
**LEVEL 39**

1. I drop through a vertical shaft of trap-door turf along the eastern fringe of the cavern. Two monks come to intercept me in the south-east corner, but a trench two blasts wide stalls them long enough for me to ascend the second of two painter's ladders. Inside a small broad chamber, I find my first acquisition in this cavern: a golden skull.
2. The two monks peer at me through the turf, waiting for my next move. This time, I plant a small bomb at the head of the painter's ladder. The blast dashes one of them out of the vicinity and forces the other to fall into a trap. I climb up the eastern painter's ladder and scale the long ladder and the painter's ladder on the eastern boundary. There, I find a small bomb and a golden skull. Since I have a bomb handy, I blast through the turf to get at a stack of gold bars at the end of the dead end, aided with a single discharge from my laser blaster.

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3. Now I begin to work the tunnels of the cavern's center, where only death's-heads can be found. At the foot of the long ladder, I run west, drop a level down, and then loop back to catch the second golden skull. I then climb a short painter's ladder to the next level, plod through a patch of turf tar, and acquire my third golden skull in the series.
 4. Through the midwestern section, I run a steeplechase: climbing up painter's ladders, dropping down short distances, trudging through turf tar, and then repeating the process all over again. A third monk tries to block my passage to the northwest, but he proves to be too slow to detain me.
 5. I sail down to a jungle beam that leads me over a narrow chasm into the northwest corner. It seems fitting that step ladders should occupy the steps of this labyrinth. Climbing them is no great feat, but at the head of the stairs I find the red key to the same-color door in the southwest portion and pocket it.
 6. Brandishing my turf toaster, I fire an exit hole and drop through it to the jungle beam. Just east, at the end of a dead-end tunnel, sits a golden skull. I can't run to it, since trap-door turf would send me reeling downward into the clutches of my adversaries. Instead, I plant a small bomb at a corner just opposite a red monk. The blast transfers him to another part of the labyrinth and permits passage to the tunnel. I then have an easy time removing the skull from obscurity.
 7. I run out of the tunnel to the jungle beam and poise over the chasm. Letting go, I drop through trap-door turf to a lower ledge, beneath which stands a single golden skull. The only way to the skull is through this ledge, so I fire a round into the turf and descend through the access hole. While packing away the last of the loot, I land on a small hand-over-hand beam and cross east to the red vault door. The key works, and I dive into the eternal aquamarine.

LEVEL 40

The tenth Urban cavern is more complex. Not only do I have to think about how to get to a particular location, but I also have to plan ahead so that I don't trap myself in a dead end or create wasteful delays

**LEVEL 40**

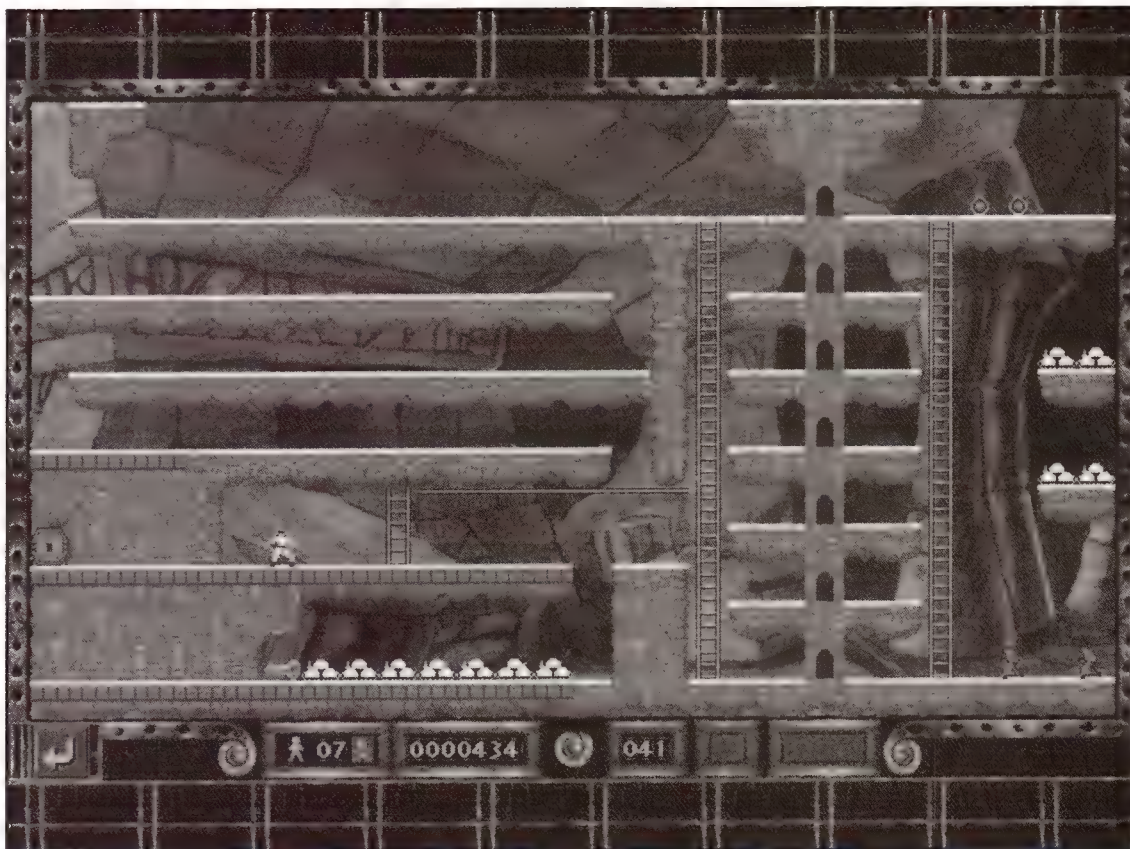
through poor planning. I still need physical stamina, but in a way mental rigor proves more essential.

1. Two long ladders bound the cavern, and three monks run toward me in the southwest corner. I carve a trench for all three of them, then hop overhead. Two reincarnate in a broad well just above. The third manages to climb out in time and starts up the west long ladder. I, in the meantime, ascend the eastern long ladder to the top ledge.
2. Below the ledge, a golden skull and a gold coin occupy a bedrock terrace. As I start for the death's-head, the monk sentry tries to assault me. I double back and retreat into a hideout. When it's safe, I re-emerge for the gold coin, then rush to the eastern end of the terrace. There I plant a small bomb, which punches entry into the chamber directly below.

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3. Descending the turf steps, I gather a treasure chest and a gold coin. Beneath me, a fierce monk guards a small enclosure. I burst through the turf and, upon landing, immediately lay a trap between him and me. After depositing the gold coin, I create an exit hole over a painter's ladder. This is a carefully planned blast. If I had forgotten to blast this particular turf square, I'd be stuck in the chamber below. This way, I'll have a more efficient exit than through the turf floor.
 4. I slip through the exit hole and palm the two gold coins that lie on the turf floor. Before the turf grows back, I make it into the next, much larger chamber. My next raid requires two stages: the upper sweep, and the lower one. I snatch a gold coin before the monk sentry can interfere, then run up the first painter's ladder to the upper ledge. The monk oscillates at the top of a painter's ladder just west of me as I gather two gold coins off the ledge unthreatened. I then turn back and fire an access hole down to where I begin my raid.
 5. For stage two of this raid, I create a trap for the monk that coerces him to hand over a gold coin that he stole from the head of the western painter's ladder. I run overhead and blast an exit hole into the lower chamber. The monk sentry there falls into my trap handily. The rest of the coins practically fall into my lap as I finish my sweep of the lower chamber.
 6. From the eastern edge of the chamber, I fire an exit hole that empties onto the top of a bedrock-capped tuft. The two monks trapped in the well are powerless to reach me, but one red monk patrols the cavern floor and closes in on me rapidly. Meanwhile, the gray exit door materializes at the top of the western long ladder. A well-timed pit-trap claims him straightaway, and I hop overhead to the western long ladder and up to the incandescent portal.

LEVEL 41

How I wish I could bring all the small bombs from the previous caverns into this one. It would greatly simplify this undertaking. How else can I get to the key door that lies thickly encased behind layers of bedrock and turf? However hard I look, I can't find any other small bombs embedded in the turf. The two mad monks, vicious and speedy like piranhas

**LEVEL 41**

who smell the blood of their victims, added further complication. These fellows are quick on their feet and quick to realize when they've been duped. But with the aid of my laser blaster, and a very focused use of the explosives, I find a solution in spite of the latter's scarcity.

1. Grabbing hold of the hand-over-hand bar, I cross a narrow chasm that bottoms out on the cavern floor. I see lots of gold ingots there, but no apparent means of escape. Postponing that, I cross to the central long ladder and rise to the top tier. Along the way, I pass a system of ledges connected to a single trunk, which reminds me of a totem pole. I gather the only two small bombs I'll ever find here.
2. At the northeastern corner, I fire into the turf and prepare to go airborne. I land on the first of two ledges that contain two stacks of gold ingots. Blasting through a section of the ledge provides

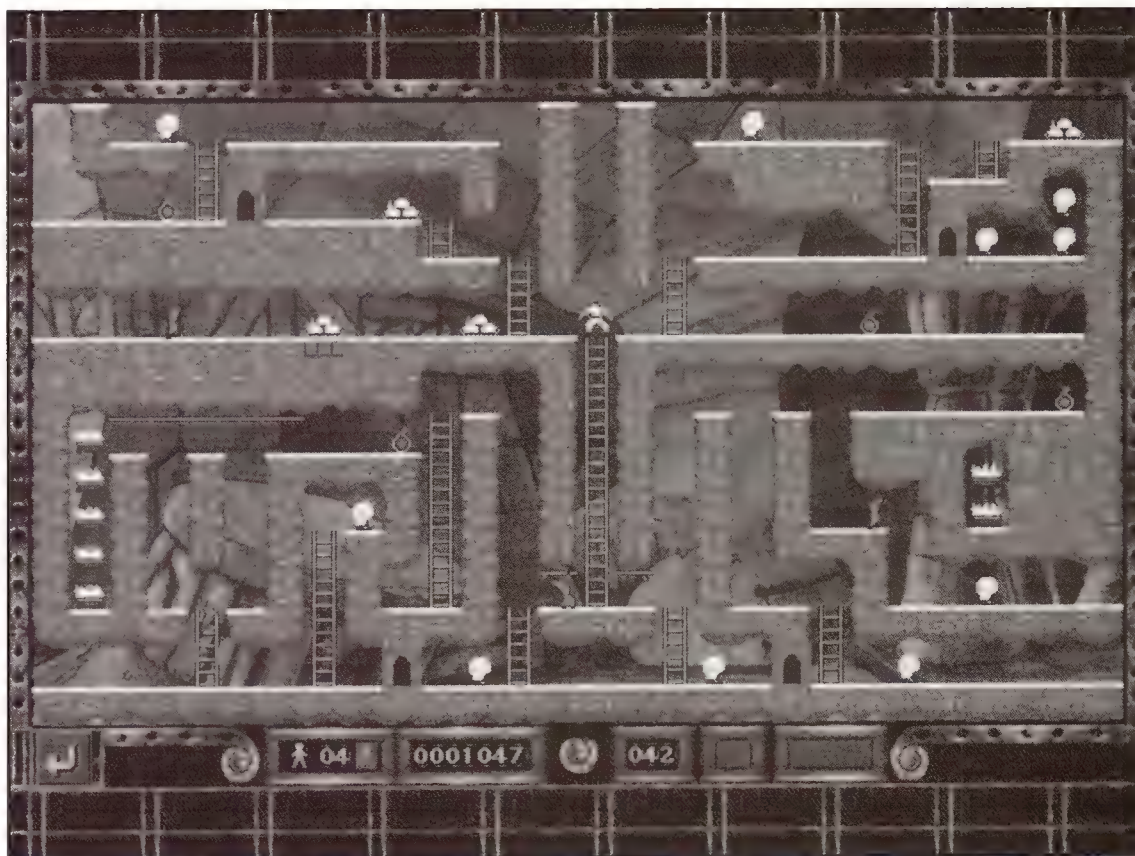
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the only means to the ledge right below. The ledges don't contain any interesting or useful goodies, so I continue down to the cavern floor.

3. By racing up the eastern long ladder, I avoid the two monks and wait for them to come rendezvous with me on the top tier. They climb up the central long ladder. I want to trap them both here because the point of entry for the monks stands right in the northwest corner of the cavern. I create a trap for them about midway on the tier—I could make a wider trench and trap them for good, but two seems to be adequate—and carve an exit hole at the juncture point.
4. Now I plan to raid the gold cache on the cavern floor. To get there, I'll have to move quickly. Rather than waste time going down the central long ladder, I make a series of strategic blasts at the various juncture points and float down through the escape holes until I land on top of the rampart.
5. Since the rampart consists of turf rather than bedrock, I level it with my laser blaster, using the central long ladder to carve through the inner turf layers. Grabbing the gold doesn't present any major difficulties, but a marauding monk intends to corner me down there. I trap him in a pit as the rampart quickly grows back in place. Before he knows where I fled, he gets squished under the force of the regrowth. Meanwhile, I traverse the jungle beam back to the ledge where I began this tour of duty.
6. I still have both bombs and a little time before the monks start harassing me again. I set the first small bomb to go off at the base of the protective barrier. After the blast, I position a second small bomb as far in as possible and then move back from it. The second blast, fortunately, provides enough megatonnage to puncture through the turf barrier as I unlock the red door of chastity.

LEVEL 42

The turf configurations of this cavern remind me of an oil refinery; they wind in all sorts of crazy directions. But there is nothing refined about the experience, and as I delve deeper into the winding grooves, I feel more like a miner deep under the Earth's crust. The many twists and turns almost get the better of me, but I prevail in the end.

**LEVEL 42**

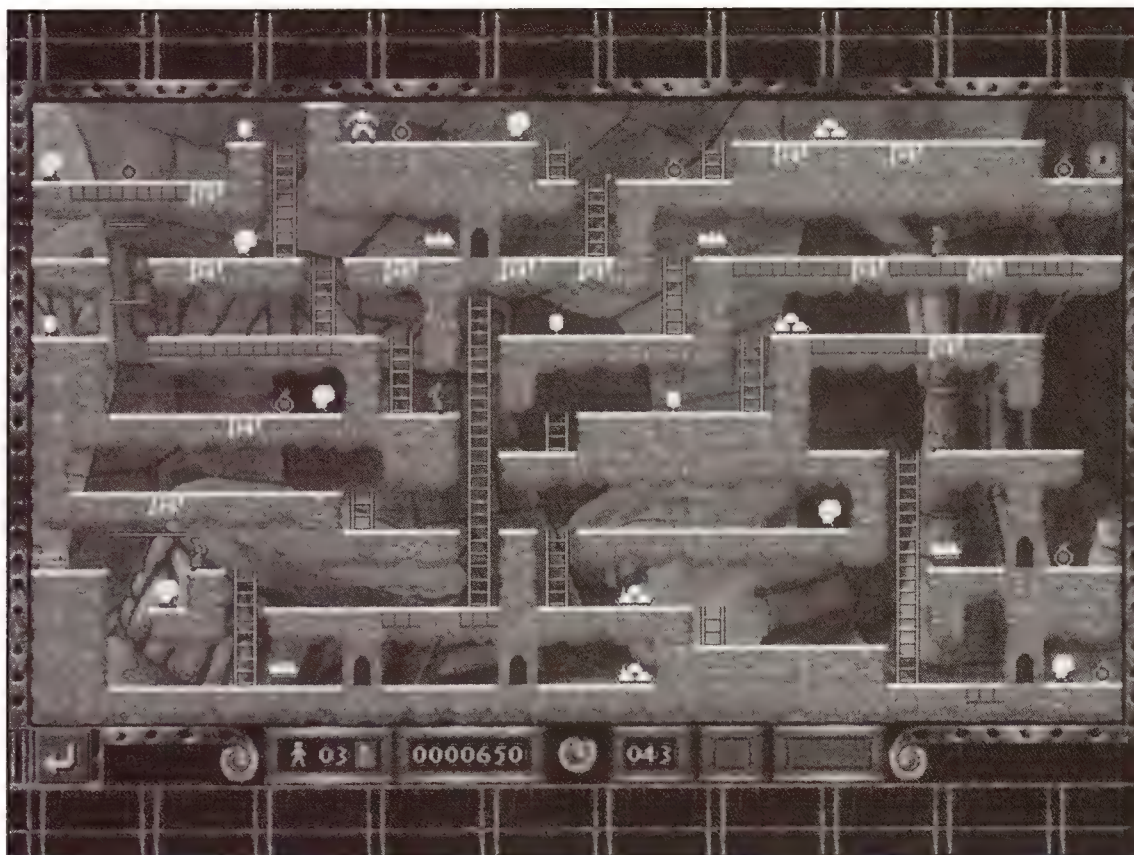
1. From the center pole position, I climb up a painter's ladder, then a step ladder into the northwest quadrant. At the top of the step ladder, I draw the monks as close as possible. Only the first one picks up on my plan; the rear guard lags behind. Then I charge west and pick up a small bomb (how I could have used it in the previous cavern!), then ascend a second painter's ladder to the top ridge, where I pick up a golden skull. As I run east across the ridge, they run in the opposite direction underneath me. I then jump over the edge.
2. Standing near the base of the first painter's ladder, I clear away an entry due west. Lowering myself through the gap, I step down a painter's ladder in the southwestern quadrant and remove the eastern wall of a small enclosure that contains a golden skull. Once I step in to steal it, however, a monk sentry attempts to capture me. Before he can get to the base of the ladder, I set off a small bomb that consumes him in its crimson flames—at least, for the time being!

3. The blast crater creates a nice barrier on the cavern floor as I traverse the jungle beam west over a number of mining shafts. Five treasure chests are stacked in the last one, and I merely have to fall through the shaft to claim them all. Earlier, I observed that the monk sentry stationed in this quadrant fell through trap-door turf at the bottom of this shaft, so I know that it's unnecessary to carve an exit hole near the mining shaft's bottom. When I drop to the cavern floor, I see that the crater has filled up again. Two monks rapidly approach, so I trap them in a trench two turf blocks wide and dash overhead.
4. I anticipated the arrival of the third monk, after seeing him over the shoulders of the first two. Just beyond a hideout, I clear a trap for him and hop over. But the place is beginning to swarm with red monks, and I can't continue trapping them like this for long, so I set off a small bomb on the other side of the first painter's ladder I come across. The blast couldn't have been timed more beautifully: not only does it obliterate all three monks, but it also consumes one monk just as he reemerges from the "in-between" world of darkness and evil. This affords me time to snatch up a golden skull lying farther east on the cavern floor. While two monks stand in the crater, I traverse a short parallel beam to the central long ladder.
5. Unhindered for the moment, I climb up the central long ladder and then a painter's ladder. I see a small bomb on the bottom, but I defer getting it. Instead, I run up to a thick ledge in the northeast quadrant, where a golden skull sits like an *objet d'art*.
6. I'm not finished with this quadrant yet. In the corner, I fire a blast into the turf directly below a stack of gold ingots. I grab it and two golden skulls on the way down. I then puncture a blast hole beneath a third golden skull and snatch it as I drop to the turf tier. Leaving the quadrant, I blast an exit hole and land on the roof of an enclosure.

Golden Rule

Gold does not fall through blast holes; it remains where it was set due to some curious property of subterranean physics. It defies the laws of gravity. Someday, I'll discuss this phenomenon with a physicist. But in practical terms, this means that I never sacrifice anything by clearing a hole directly underneath a treasure chest, coin, ingot, or golden skull and, in fact, save time by grabbing it as I jump through the hole.

TIPS
TIPS
TIPS

**LEVEL 43**

7. Calling this a roofed enclosure is a bit of an overstatement. It's a thick ledge with a long arch inside. The arch hollow contains two treasure chests; a golden skull lies beneath the floor of the arch. It proves unnecessary to fire a descending series, since the floor of the arch turns out to be trap-door turf. A blast through the roof of the arch creates a nice, clean entry. After I grab the skull, I stand hardly four steps from the gray exit door. Before the two red monks can get to me, I plunge headlong into the blue-green car wash.

LEVEL 43

This Urban cavern gives me the feeling of a crowded metropolis. The intricacy of this raid surpasses all others. There are no open spaces, but lots of jointed tiers. Sometimes a step ladder or painter's ladder permits passage over the joint, but at other times I have to plan my drops so that I don't get forced into making a loop or, worse yet, get stuck in a cul-de-sac.

1. Where to begin? That's always the most difficult question in a cavern of this complexity. Since a retaining wall blocks western passage, I run east over a step ladder and pick up a golden skull and a small bomb. I see a small bomb just beyond the ladder, but decide to leave that for the time being. I then descend a painter's ladder and decide on a western course over three patches of turf tar, past a hideout toward a golden skull.
2. Sometimes deciding on a course is the most difficult step. At least now, standing in the northwest corner, things begin to fall into place. I make two incisions, dropping down each time: first to pick up a death's-head, then a gold coin. I then cross east via a short parallel beam and land inside a small cavern, at the east end of which are a small bomb and a golden skull. The turf tar creates a minor nuisance, but since the floor is made entirely of turf, I don't worry about making an emergency exit.
3. Two monks peer at me from the other side of the small cavern. If I don't deal with them now, they might pose a problem after I exit. The small bomb does the trick. The blast blows out the eastern edge of the tiny cavern and catches them in a trench. They cough up two gold items, but it's too risky to snatch them now; the monks might climb out of the crater before I can make it over there. Instead, I blast an exit along the western boundary. The second blast comes right below because I want to take the red key now while I'm in the southwestern quadrant.
4. One of the monks reincarnates inside the small cavern, so he's trapped for the duration of my tour. The other monk, however, approaches quickly. I take the red key, then cross a short parallel beam to a small ledge that contains a golden skull, then jump down to the cavern floor. I run toward a treasure chest, but the cavern floor stops short. What now? The red monk comes down the painter's ladder, and I have to trap him in a turf pit to rise out of this cul-de-sac. This monk moves so fast that I have to trap him in a turf hole between two bedrock slabs before safely detonating a small bomb to take care of his two evil cohorts.
5. The blast sends one monk to the county jail, the little cavern that I first encountered, which has become a cell of sorts. The other joins his comrade in the southwestern quadrant, making me glad that I've

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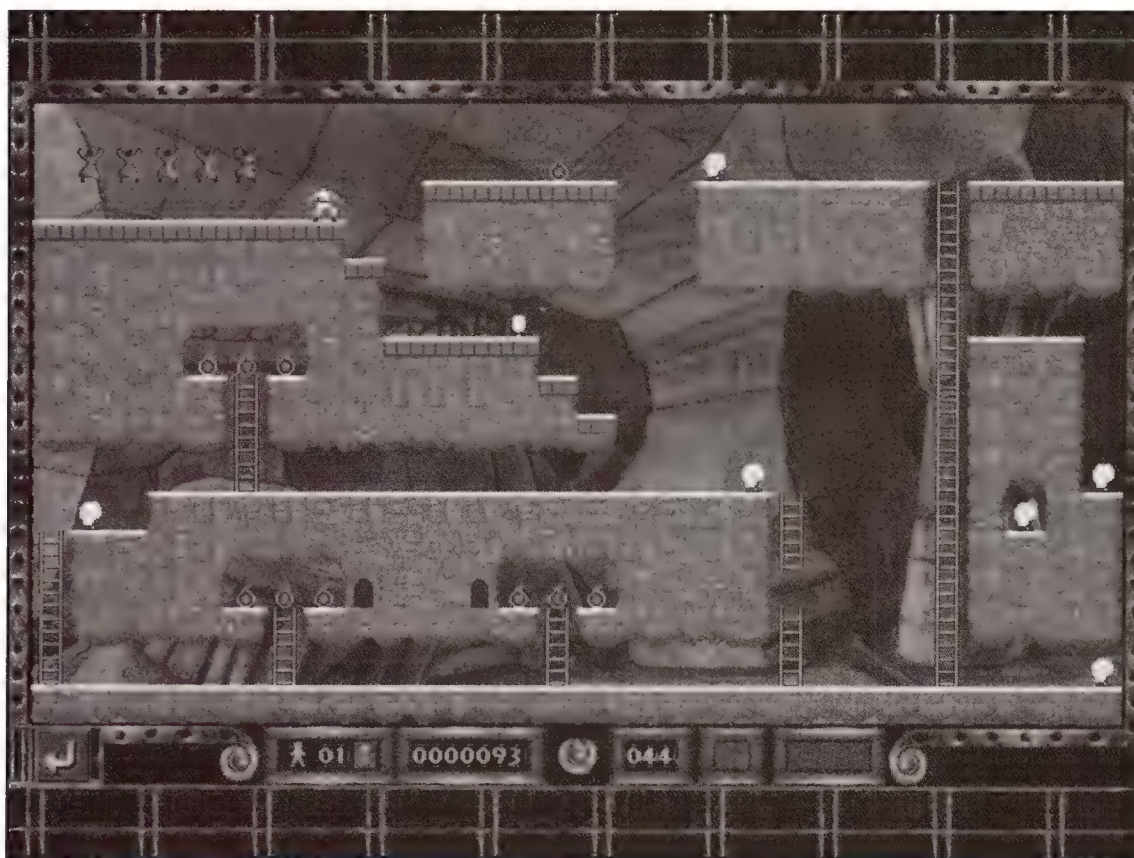
already taken the red key that was stored there. I run down to the southeastern corner, where I pick up a golden skull and a small bomb. I then rise up the series of terraced steps to a second small cavern. In the small cavern's rear sits a golden skull. I pack it into my rucksack, then find it necessary to trap a menacing monk in order to escape.

6. On my way up the central long ladder, I spot the two items of gold left behind from the blast of the first small bomb. After taking those, I climb up a series of jointed tiers, pocketing a gold coin and then climbing up a painter's ladder to get to a stack of gold ingots. I climb up a series of ladders to the top tier and pick up the stack of gold ingots. This triggers the divine door chime. I unlock the red vault door and enter the godly gossamer.

LEVEL 44

According to legend, the ancient city of Ur contained many riddles meant to confound and trap thieves, leaving them to rot among vermin. The architects of this cavern created mind-bending obstacles that only a mathematical mind like mine could decipher. But in addition to solving the puzzles here, I find it beneficial to practice certain stalling techniques to keep the five mad monks at bay whilst I plunder the place.

1. Dare I move? Where else have I seen five dancing monks poised like Mary Poppins? No one would believe me. There is only one direction I can take: east. I make it down the bedrock steps, first taking a gold coin and then dropping down to a thick ledge below. I reach for the golden skull there, but instead I fall through trap-door space. I come out on the cavern floor and sprint for the southeastern corner, where I stash a golden skull.
2. The monks come down to the cavern floor. I find that by creeping up the long ladder in stages, just a few rungs at a time, they group on ladders in the southwestern corner, where they remain in a quasi-paralyzed state. Once they reach paralysis, I proceed up the long ladder to the top of the brick bluff.
3. The monks remain immobile on the ladders to the west, so I'm free to work undisturbed. Through a series of vertical blasts, and by

**LEVEL 44**

using the ladder as my axis, I gradually flatten the brick bluff until it becomes level with the golden skull hidden in the small alcove. As the brick grows back overhead, I race up to the top of the bluff and drop down to the golden skull at the bottom of the eastern shaft. I then jump down to the alcove treasure and whisk it away before the bluff fully reconstitutes.

4. At the top of the long ladder, I start to work on the ridge that faces west. I want to get to the golden skull that sits on the edge of the terrace below. This is a declining three series, but I start with four blasts because I want to make sure I blast directly over the death's-head. Then, like a bomber pilot sighting his target, I make careful measurements and drop down successfully to the golden skull.
5. One golden skull remains. I have five monks to face and no small bombs handy. I go into a free fall and wait on the cavern floor for the monks to approach. I then gradually engage them up the eastern long ladder. When they reach a sufficient elevation, I hurl myself like

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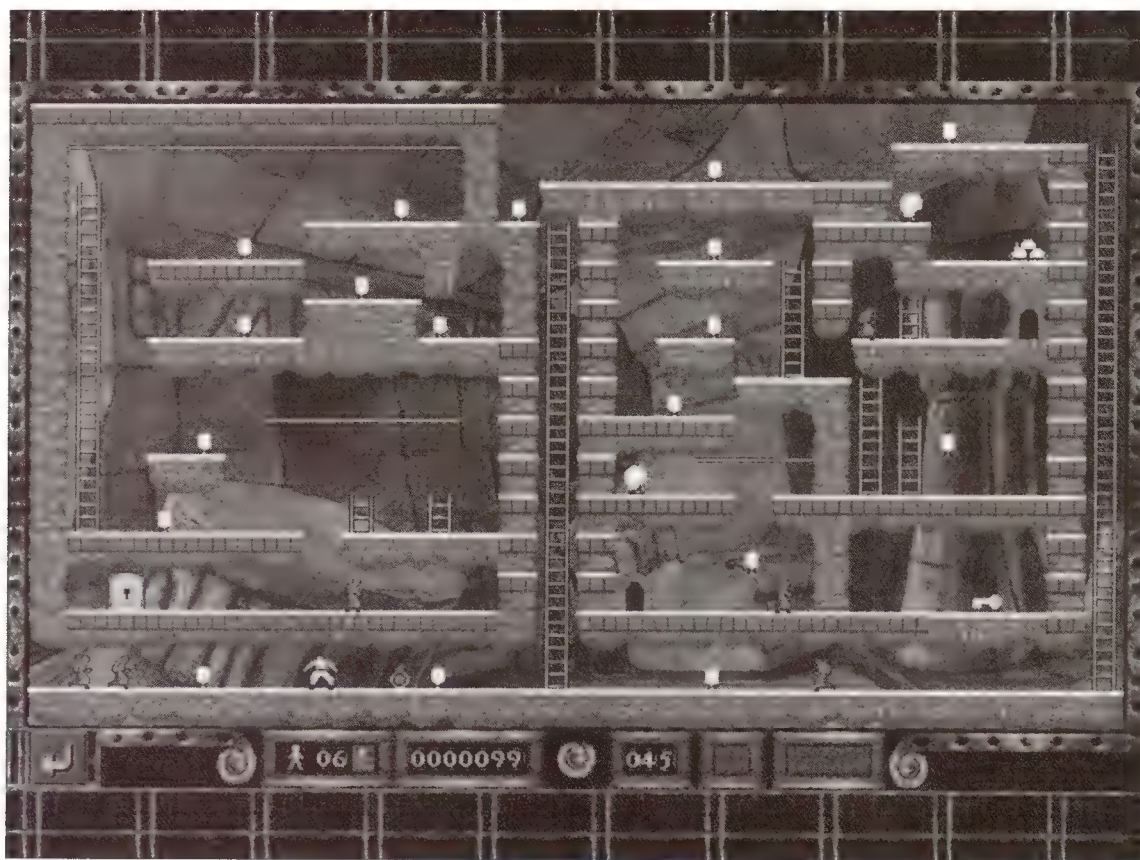
a lemming over the west-facing ridge and fall through the trap-door turf to the cavern floor.

6. My pulse is racing. Four monks behind me and one in front. I trap the first in a pit, then dash overhead to the western long ladder. At the top I find the last remaining gold skull in this cavern. I grow nervous when I see no apparent means of escape, but then the gray exit door brings an invisible step ladder to view. I climb up the network of ladders to the skyward portal and dive into the sapphire mist.

LEVEL 45

In my grand finale run, I face six highly aggressive red monks who have every intention of trapping me where their brethren have failed. So far, no human has penetrated this far into the Evil Empire, at least no human who ever made it out alive. I intend to change that statistic, despite the formidable obstacles—especially the impervious partitions and the confusing traps.

1. Two monks to the west of me, one to the east. I snatch the gold coin between me and the pair, then run east toward the lone monk, picking up a small bomb and a second gold coin en route. Just west of the central long ladder, I dig a pit for the third monk. As he falls in sidelong, he tosses a third gold coin in the air, which I pocket as I speed toward the eastern long ladder.
2. From the top of the long ladder, I run to the western lip of the top ridge and bust entry into the chamber below. I reclaim a golden skull that sits on a short ledge and then fire an access hole into the second chamber below, grabbing gold ingots on the way down. A fearsome monk sentry runs toward me, but the pit-hole stops him before he can get his clawed hands around my neck.
3. While the sentry stands befuddled, I blast an access hole into the third chamber below. It's very important that I clear away the western edge because that permits access to the third chamber. I palm a gold coin, then hurry up the painter's ladder and head west on the short ledge above.
4. In this chamber I find three gold coins. To begin, I fire an exit hole that I don't plan to use until after I grab the third coin. You see, the

**LEVEL 45**

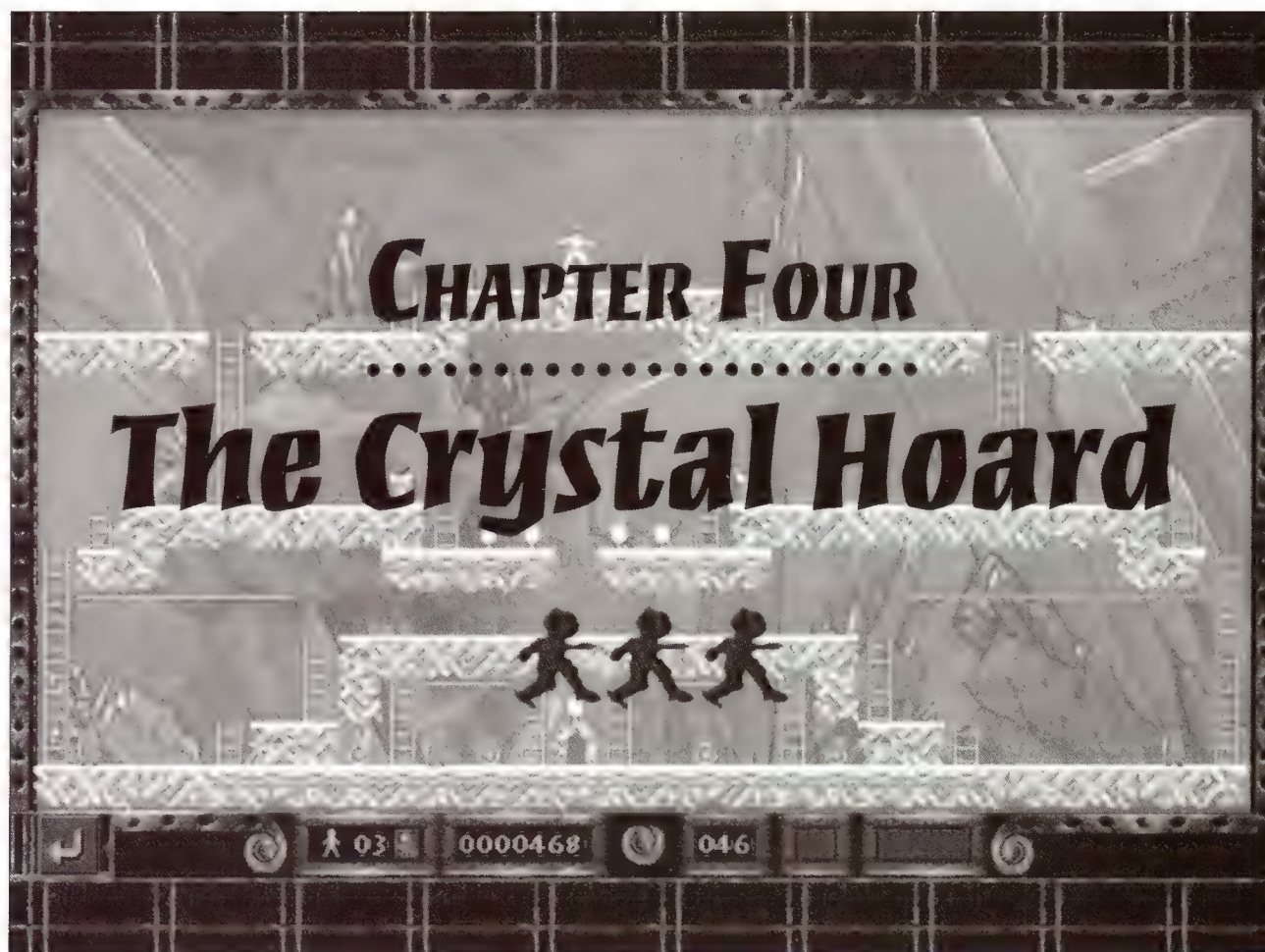
lip of this ledge on which I stand blocks exit from the lower bedrock ledge just west of it. After I make the blast, I hurry up to the top ledge, grab the first gold coin, then fire an entry hole through the middle of the ledge down to the second one. From the second ledge, I jump down to the bedrock and take the third gold coin. Since I move swiftly, I leave before the tip reconstructs, and I'm free to depart to the chamber below.

5. Directly below, a golden skull sits on a bedrock ledge identical to the one above it. After taking it, I grab the hand-over-hand beam and hover over a gold coin. This serves as a marker. After I drop through the gap, I plant a small bomb exactly where I landed and take cover by the hideout. The blast destroys the mad monk while accomplishing my main purpose: tearing down a turf wall. Running east, I find the golden key that belongs to the vault door on the western flank and slip it into my pocket.

6. After removing the key, I blast an exit hole in the southeast corner of the chamber and drop to the cavern floor below. There, three monks meet me; I lead them up the eastern long ladder, mindful of their distance. When I feel satisfied that they are committed to this side of the cavern, I climb up to the roof ledges and drop down to the lower tier, where a single gold coin begins the next stage of my raid.
7. To get to the central long ladder, I toast the edge of the tier and drop down to retrieve a second gold coin at the top of a brick column. With the blaster, I make a vertical incision down the wall of a narrow enclosure. This creates just enough room for me to jump through safely and seize the second gold coin. I then clear away a blast hole in the southwestern corner and sail down to a jungle beam.
8. From the jungle beam, I drop down onto solid bedrock. I then climb up the western long ladder and traverse east via a rooftop hand-over-hand bar. The second half of my raid turns out to be harder than it looks. I don't have any more small bombs, so I have to make a second loop later. For the first loop, I start by taking a gold coin off the top ridge and then firing into the lip of the turf brick. Inside a narrow space, I blast through a disjointed tier and take another gold coin.
9. An access hole through this ledge permits the only means of obtaining the gold coin on the ledge directly beneath me. I then climb up the western long ladder a second time and loop over via the hand-over-hand bar until I dangle just over the last gold coin. The tubular bells ring forth, signaling that I have concluded my gold digging for this, the final cavern in the Urban series. I still have to get past the two red monks guarding the golden vault door, but through sheer agility, I trap them in a turf grave and finesse my way to the door, unlock it, and leave the Lost City of Ur forever.

CONCLUSION

I'm sorry to leave this archaeological wonder but glad to have all the treasure in my possession. Next, I head for the fourth cavern, the beautiful red Crystal Hoard. As mesmerizing as these giant crystals can be, however, they also help camouflage the red monks, making them difficult to spot against the cavern background. I definitely enter at my peril!



The Bible says that money is the root of all evil. Probably. But what about crystals? Now there's a tough theological question for you. Not easy to figure out. If only St. Thomas Aquinas were alive now to unravel that mystery.

For you logophiles out there, a hoard means a hidden or secret supply stored up for future use. This is the place the Evil Empire hoards all of its crystals. The crystal outgrowths are too large to be rubies, but they're spectacular to behold just the same. At times, it's easy to become too mesmerized. The red monks, who seem to swarm in even greater numbers, easily camouflage themselves against the cavern's background. Unless they move, it's hard to see them against it, so I put off the sightseeing to maintain a constant vigil.

So far in my journeys, I've taken advantage of my laser blaster, small bombs, and the hideouts. Those three still remain available,

but now I have a new tool at my disposal: *slime buckets*. Slime buckets occur naturally in the Crystal Hoard, and in vast quantities. Slime creates turf tar, and it comes in buckets. Grab the bucket and toss the slime—it's that easy! And it sure comes in handy in those sticky situations, if you'll excuse the pun.

Tools of the Trade

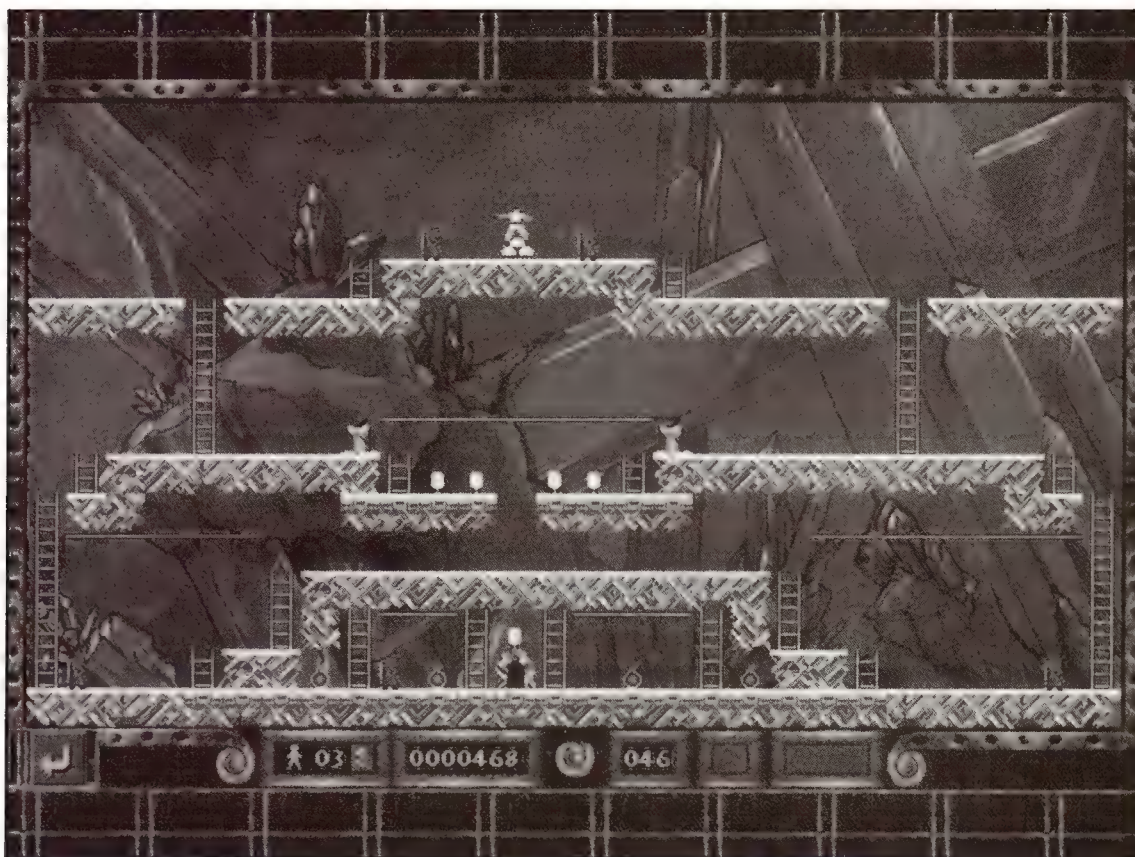
TIPS TIPS TIPS

As more tools become available to me, I become aware of an important limitation: in the Evil Empire, I can only carry one tool at a time. It doesn't matter that I have plenty of pockets. Them's the rules. The laser blaster doesn't count. This never gets in the way. But if, for example, I want to pick up a key, I can't pick up a slime bucket until I put down the key, and vice versa. As tools begin to multiply in later kingdoms, this point becomes a more important factor.

LEVEL 46

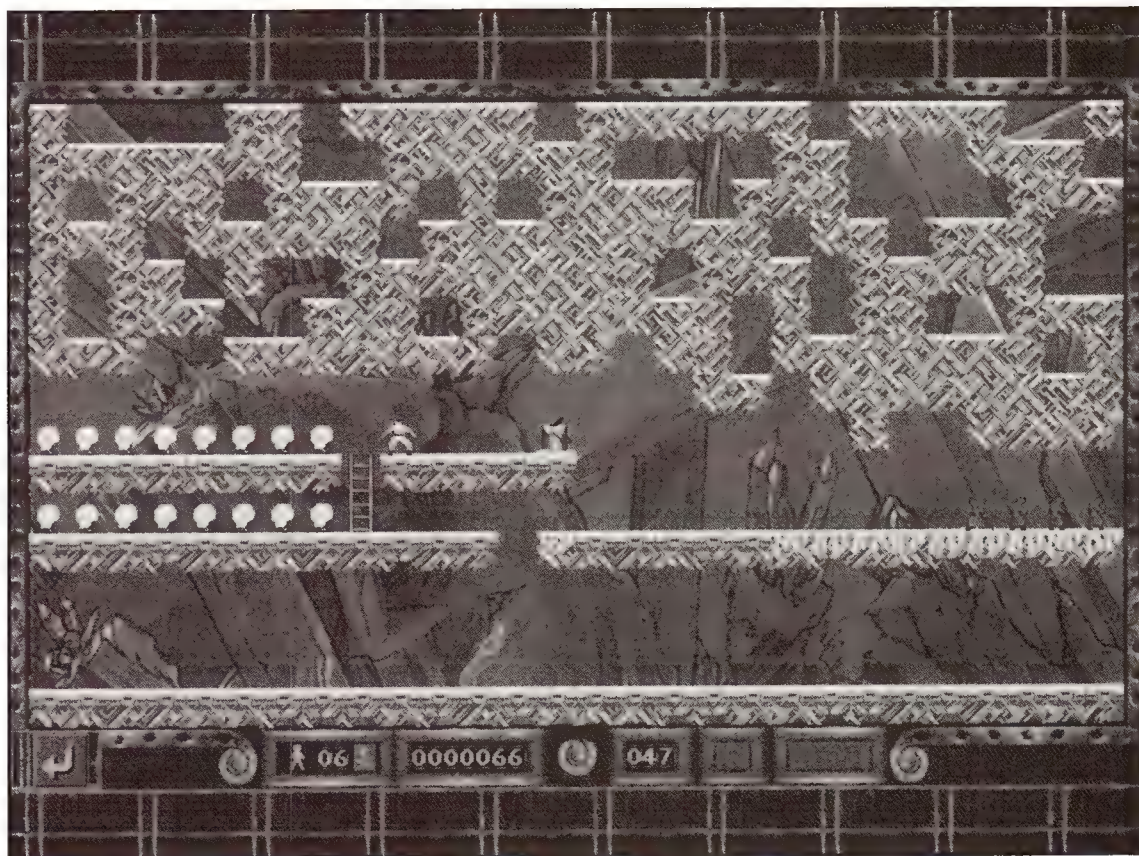
The first crystal cavern assaults my senses with a brilliant color burst. My eyes adjust to the reddish hues just in time as I hurtle downward toward the first jungle beam. As I'll find later, just because this is the first cavern in the hoard doesn't mean it'll be easy. But through this, I get an opportunity to practice using the highly reputed slime buckets.

1. If I tarry too long on the center of the jungle beam, the two red monks on the top tier will come through the trap-door turf and maul me. I traverse west and pick up two gold coins on the bedrock crystal ledge. At the top of the ladder, I find a slime bucket and stick it to my person. I then cross east to the other side of the beam, at which point I suppress an appreciation for the cavern's symmetry and gather up the two coins on the eastern ledge.
2. Midway across the jungle beam, I release my grip and sail downward through a narrow chasm and then through the trap-door roof of the cavern-floor enclosure. During my descent, I snatch the last gold coin in the cavern. Twin gray exit doors appear on the rooftop tiers; getting there will be no easy task. I quickly slip into a hideout and wait for the monk sentry to clear off to one side.



LEVEL 46

3. I find four small bombs in this small chamber alone. Dodging west, I pinch one small bomb and light the fuse just as the mad monk pursues me to the east. The blast catches him, and he reincarnates on the western side of the cavern. As I hook two more small bombs on my belt, I decide it would be safe to blow out an exit on the eastern side, since only two monks are over there. The explosion forces an opening but does not reach far enough to extinguish the two monks.
4. “Slime bucket, don’t fail me now,” I say to the inanimate muck. I hurl it at the stretch of turf between two painter’s ladders, then draw the monks into the thick of the turf tar. At the midpoint, I clamber up the ladder and cross east on the jungle beam, managing to escape the chamber just as the crystal turf regenerates. With the monks now trapped inside the chamber, I’m free to ascend to the eastern rooftop tier.



LEVEL 47

5. Meanwhile, the malevolent monks on the western side pose no immediate threat, so I rise up the terraced steps to the eastern portal and lunge into the blue vaporous fizz.

LEVEL 47

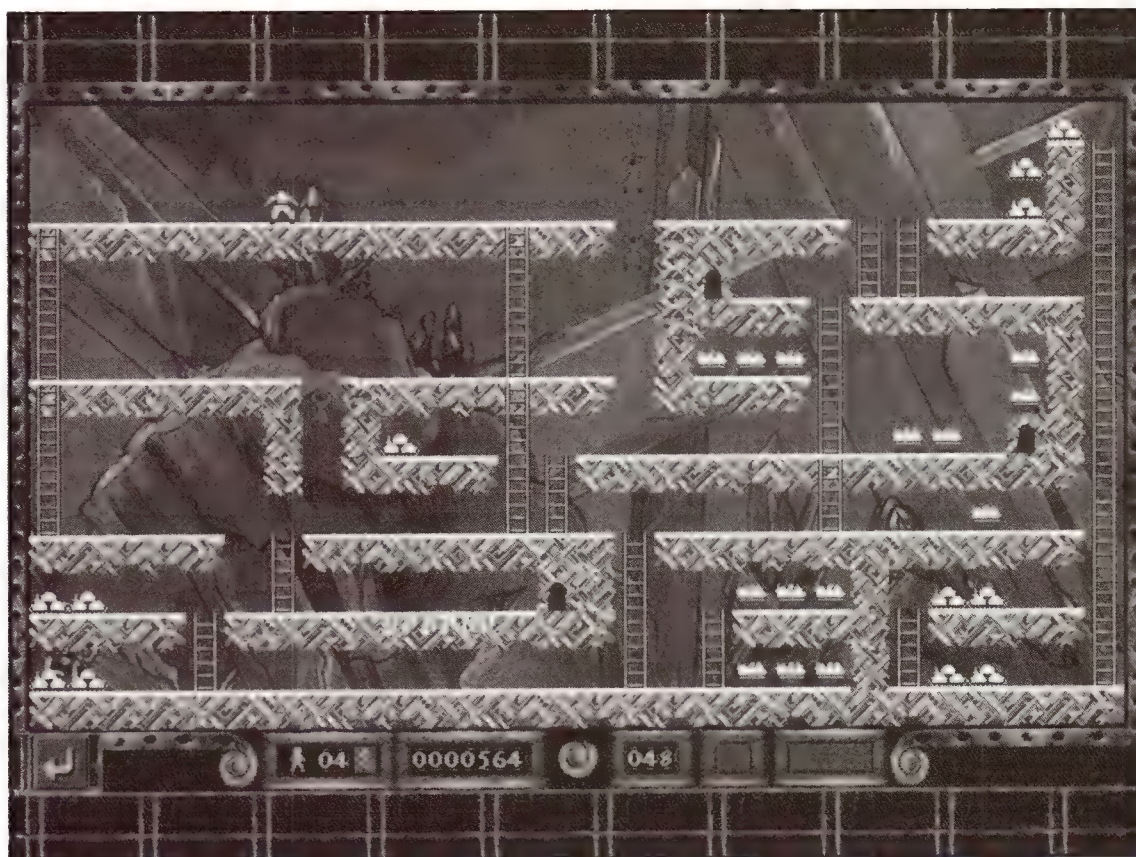
A red crystal honeycomb fills the top half of the cavern. To the west, 16 golden skulls, eight on each ridge, look very enticing. On the distant ridge, a pack of red monks struggles through a broad spread of turf tar, and a bucket of slime stands on the edge of my ridge. Somehow, I'll have to add to their slime-induced misery and make it to the exit before getting caught.

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1. I grab hold of the bucket and throw its orange contents over the bare crystal bedrock below. I then turn 180 degrees and clean up the eight golden skulls on my tier. I rush back to the painter's ladder and descend to the second ridge, where eight more death's-heads need harvesting.
 2. Turning, I see that it's now just a race against the lead red monk. The gray exit door arises in the southeastern corner of the cavern. I dash to the lip of the lower ledge and drop down to the cavern floor, just barely ahead of the red monk. Since the floor consists entirely of bedrock crystal, my laser blaster will be powerless to detain them. But since I have the head-start advantage, I sprint for the soluble dreamworld and leap into the next cavern.

LEVEL 48

Crystal turf grows in similar formations as moss, fungus, and the brick turf. At least, that's the impression I get as I scoop up the cavern's hoard of gold. I don't find any slime buckets in the third crystal cavern either, but the abundance of turf ledges, as well as several hideouts, makes it possible to inhibit the progress of the malignant monks who dwell here.

1. The crystal tier where I stand is barren. With my laser blaster, I clear entry to the top of a cavern below, then fire a second time into the roof of the cavern. Inside, I find golden ingots and, after adding them to my portable hoard, exit via a third blast.
2. On the tier below, three mad monks come to bid me good day. I trap the first in a pit, then clear an exit hole down to a lower ledge. The second monk follows me through the hole but becomes surprised when he finds that he can't follow me. With them off my back, I dash to the southwestern corner and pilfer the gold bars stored there.
3. I drop down to the cavern floor and wait until I lure two monks toward the painter's ladder. Meanwhile, the third monk—the one who just received a thorough crushing—emerges overhead and drops down to join his fellow brothers in the evil faith. I lead them into the small cavern, across a patch of turf tar. When they get sufficiently immersed in the sappy substance, I blast an exit for myself.



LEVEL 48

4. I run east and find treasure chests on the cavern floor. On the ledge above, more treasure chests appear just waiting for me to rip them from the crystal ore. Before the three monks come within close range, I scamper up the painter's ladder to the crystal tier and grab another treasure chest.
5. I ascend the eastern long ladder to the roof of the cavern, then leap into a free fall over two gold-bar stacks. I blast an entry into the chamber below and collect treasure chests that are either stacked or lying on the floor. That leaves several treasure chests on a ledge above, but I have to think fast because a red monk rapidly approaches.
6. I decide to go for it, clearing out the three treasure chests with the finesse of a hummingbird. If I blast an exit to the tier below, I risk being surrounded by the three monks. So instead I scale up the first

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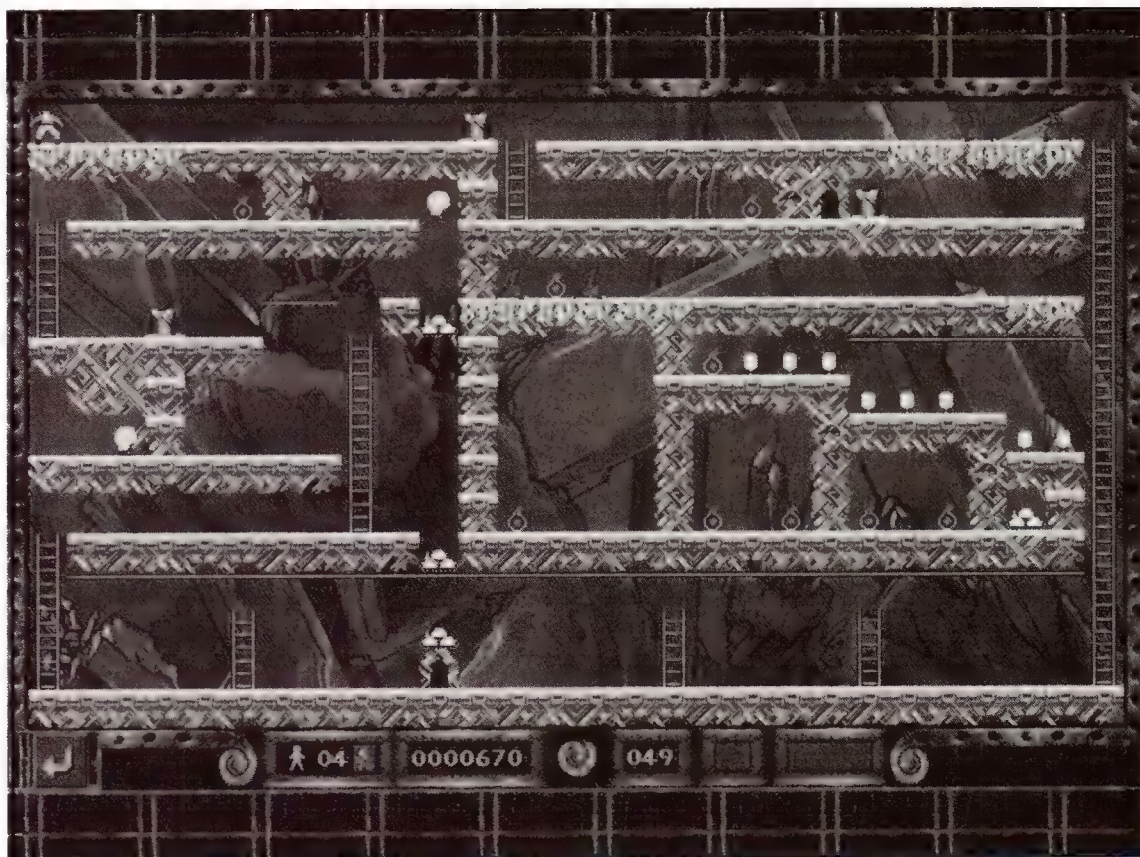
painter's ladder, then the second painter's ladder, to the rooftop tier. My laser blaster clears an exit for me in the eastern corner, and I drop below, heading for the eastern long ladder.

7. I clamber down the long ladder with all the speed I can muster. In the southeastern corner, treasure chests occupy the lower ledges, which are mirror images of the ones on the other side. As I steal the last chest, the gray exit door materializes in the northwestern corner, a polar opposite. You can never count on them being in exactly the most convenient place. I trap one monk in the cavern floor and dash over his head for the long ladder.
8. I break off from the ladder midway and run west to the first painter's ladder. I rise to the next tier to avoid combat with the lurking monk pair and run as fast as my legs will take me to the next painter's ladder. Eventually, I make my way up to the western rooftop tier and jump through greenish haze.

LEVEL 49

In the fourth crystal cavern, the abundance of slime buckets fills my heart with joy. I'm really anxious to trap these brothers in the toxic sludge they so deserve. But there are other treats besides: lots of small bombs, challenging obstacles, and, naturally, tons of gold.

1. Two menacing mad monks eye me from the northeastern end of the rooftop tier, so I sprint toward the slime bucket and fling the contents over crystal turf. It falls adjacent to the exposed bedrock, leaving a clear path in between. I loop down to the cavern ledge right below and find a small bomb. Feeling a rush of pyromania, I plant the bomb with purpose against the crystal wall. The blast forces an opening east, and I cross past the hideout to the other side of the divide.
2. With monks coming at me from both sides, I disappear inside the hideout. Unfortunately, there is no cuneiform graffiti, so I try to make the most of my time while I wait for them to congregate in the pool of slime on the rooftop tier. I emerge when the sound of their feet slurping through the sludge grows to an almost deafening pitch.

**LEVEL 49**

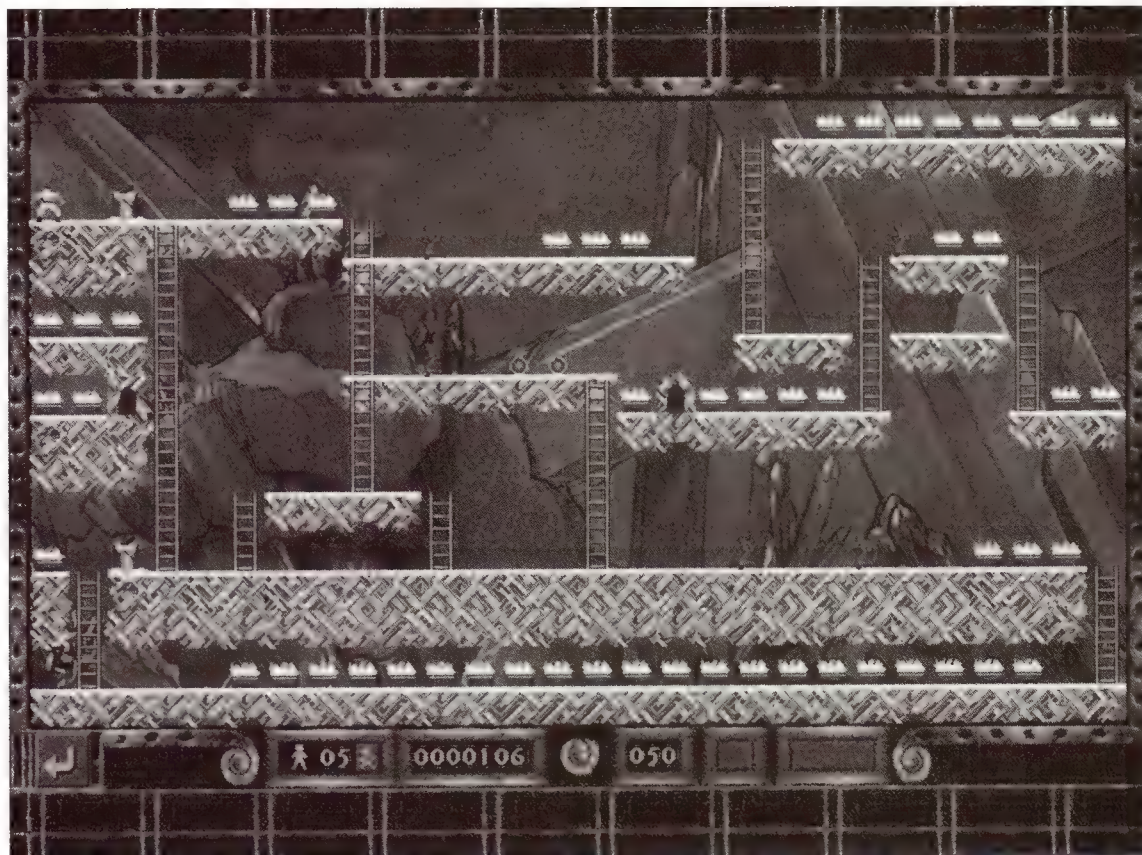
A slime bucket calls out for me to grab it, so I do, not knowing when it might come in handy. I then slip down the eastern long ladder and enter the large cavern with the terraced garden of gold.

3. Traversing the jungle beam west, I drop about midway to the middle step and sweep off the gold coins there and on the one below. I then loop my way back up to the jungle beam and, while collecting the remaining coins, plant a small bomb against the crystal retaining wall. The blast shakes the cavern as I wait safely from the beam.
4. The monks come down swiftly to investigate the racket, but by then I've already jumped into the large square chamber. Inside, I find a small bomb, which seems to serve no useful purpose but to tear down the large crystal partition in front of me. The blast sets off a chain reaction that thunders through the cavern. When the final blast echoes, I saunter over to the stack of gold bars and stuff it into my sack.

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5. I find a patch of crystal turf conveniently located in the southeastern corner of the last chamber. The blast from the laser pistol allows me to descend through the gap to an enormous hand-over-hand bar that spans the entire breadth of the cavern. The four monks follow me as I trek westward. When I come over a suspended stack of gold bars, I drop to the cavern floor and pick up the gold on the way down. The monks follow suit.
 6. While standing in the center of the cavern floor, I suddenly see a use for the bucket of slime I picked up early in my tour. Sneaking into the hideout, I wait for the monks to disappear to the upper ledge. Then I eject the slime east in the direction of the monks, then reverse direction and climb up the western long ladder, making my way unimpeded into the northwestern quadrant.
 7. Inside the chamber, on the top ledge, I find a small bomb nestled against a crystal retaining wall. I light it right there, and the blast clears an entrance to the other side of the ledge. There I find a vertical shaft that contains a golden skull and two separate stacks of gold bars. I drop through the shaft collecting the gold as though it were the spring harvest.
 8. The monks were nowhere near in sight, affording me the leisure to go about excavating the last golden skull in this cavern. I looped around to the ledge above and carved a descending series of two. After I collected the deadhead, the gray exit door chimed overhead situated on a tiny ledge near the vertical shaft. I blasted an exit hole in the southwestern corner of the enclosure and ascended the stairs to the blue conveyor.

LEVEL 50

They say 50 is a milestone. When married couples reach their 50th wedding anniversary, they call it the golden anniversary. I guess the 100th anniversary would be considered platinum. No, I'm still not married, and the bells I hear are only gray exit doors, not wedding bells. But when I reach the 50th cavern, my eyes nearly pop out of their sockets. Never have I seen this much gold in a single cavern before; certainly not this many treasure chests: 53 in all! Most of the treasure chests line the

**LEVEL 50**

cavern floor, which presents a logistical problem since there are only two narrow byways, in both corners. To accumulate all the gold, then, I'll have to use as much cunning as possible and all the slime buckets at my disposal.

1. Running east, I pick up the slime bucket and deposit the three treasure chests at the end of the tier. A roving monk comes close to taking my head off, but I double back and descend the western long ladder to two ledges along the western boundary; each one contains two treasure chests.
2. The heat gets a little heavy, so I spend some time cooling off in a hideout until the monks squeeze together on the upper rungs of the long ladder. I burst out of the hideout, pick up a lone treasure chest in the lower quadrant, then run down to the cavern floor. Four monks follow me through the western entrance to the cavern floor;

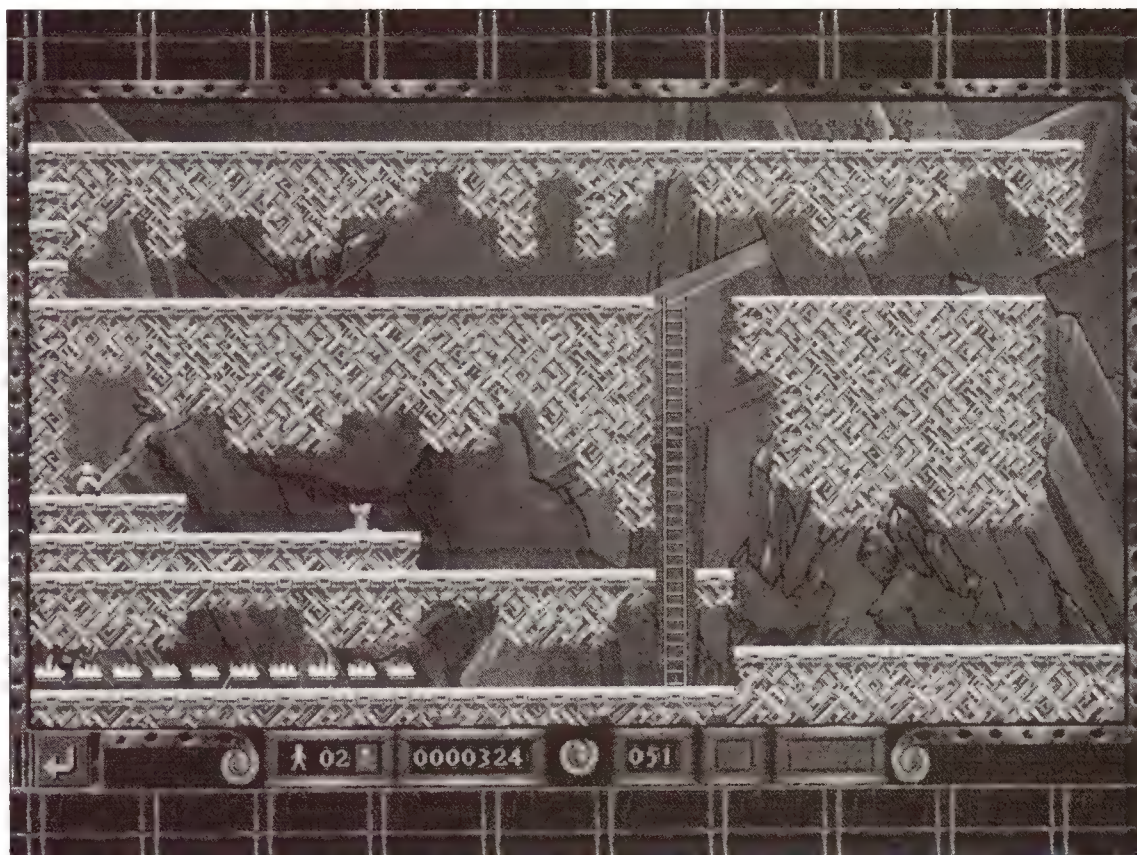
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the fifth seems on his way. A little ways in, I turn toward them and pitch the orange slime near the entrance. I then run like a mad dog east to the end of the tunnel.

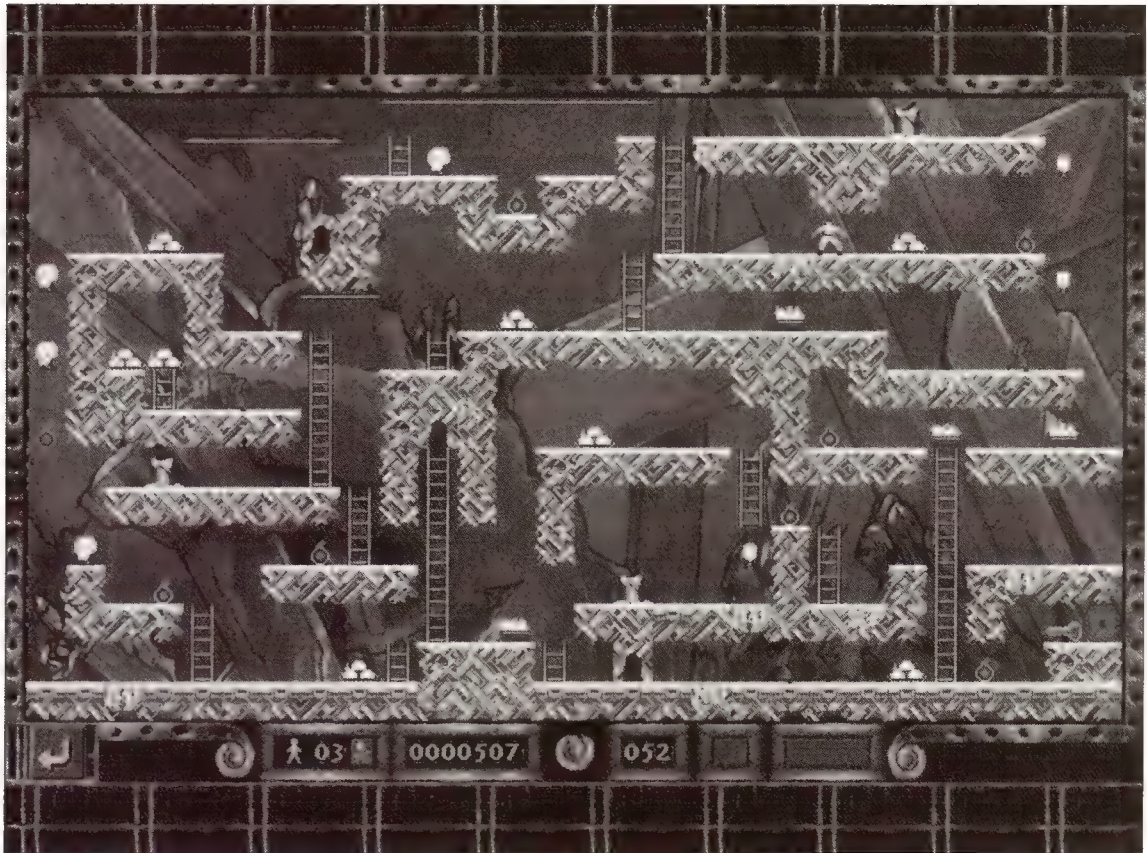
3. I bait the five monks at the east end of the tunnel, then charge up to the roof of the tunnel and run west, picking up two treasure chests. The second one is a stray that was set down by a mad monk in an open fit of exasperation. I then make my way up to the rooftop terrace just east of the western long ladder, picking up the treasure chests I spotted at the beginning of this tour. Meanwhile, the monks completely lose their bearings and fumble their way up to the top of the crystal cavern.
4. I jump over the edge of the terrace and float down to a middle ledge, forgetting the two small bombs behind me and making like a jack-rabbit up to the northeastern quadrant. Like a baleen whale scooping up krill, the treasure chests fall into my backpack just as effortlessly. Two monks come up a painter's ladder with furious intent, but I clear away an exit hole to drop down to the remaining treasure.
5. Two chests fall into my clutches on the ledge right below. I jump down to another ledge touching the eastern border and clear up the remainder. The gray exit door beckons from the southwestern corner. To get there, I first lure the five monks down the eastern entrance to the cavern floor and, at the appropriate time, dash for the giant vat of Aqua Velva and disappear with a triumphant splash.

LEVEL 51

It appears at first that I have plenty of time to outstrip the three monks on the rooftop tier. After all, how often do I have the advantage of being so close to the gold hoard? A whole row of treasure chests sits beneath me, and the three menacing monks start from the opposite corner. But all that is an illusion. The sixth crystal hoard tests my reflexes and stamina to the utmost. This is like a 100-yard dash, and my only hope of breaking through the tape depends on timing and sliming.

**LEVEL 51**

1. While running down the steps, I grab the slime bucket by the handle and then stop at the very lip of the bottom step. The slime flies outward and lands on the upper tier of the cavern floor, just east of the one and only ladder in the cavern.
2. I slip down the long ladder like a fireman down a fire pole and scrape up the ten treasure chests. The last one invokes the gray exit door in the northwest corner. The cavern floor is made of solid bedrock. There is no way to lay a trap. Pushing my leg muscles to the limit, I just barely manage to reach the ladder before the first mad monk does.
3. Once on the ladder, I'm home free. At the top, I peel west to the exit portal and make the banana plunge.



LEVEL 52

LEVEL 52

I'm starting to formulate names for the different kinds of caverns that follow a maze pattern. I've seen spiral mazes and complex mazes: the former looks like a spiral, whereas the latter takes so many sudden turns that it defies easy description. This Crystal Hoard, on the other hand, consists mostly of level surfaces with a few chambers thrown in here and there. Hence, I call it a lateral maze. The term simply means that there are more lateral surfaces than other kinds. Rather than generalize about solutions, let me just show you how I attack this puzzle.

1. From my starting stance, I run east and steal gold bars and a small bomb. I double back to the starting point and clear away an access hole to the central crystal tier. Sprinting west, I remove a treasure chest and a stack of gold bars. Rather than zigzag downward, I head north toward the cavern rooftop and traverse west via the jungle beam.

2. I drop before a golden skull and slip it into my bottomless rucksack. Then I resume west across a lower jungle beam. About halfway across, I fly down to the roof of an enclosure and land on a stack of gold bars. Along the western boundary, two golden skulls and a small bomb hang suspended. I parachute down the shaft to retrieve these delectable goods, but when I touch down, a monk sentry tries to ambush me from behind. A well-placed small bomb turns him to ashes.
3. I know I'll see him again eventually, so I plan a counterattack while the looting resumes. While he reincarnates in the northwest quadrant, I have my heart and mind set on a golden skull that sits on a crystal pedestal. The only way to it is by looping up and over a crystal ledge that stands just underneath the enclosure where I found the two other death's-heads and the small bomb. I climb the step ladder—picking up a treasure chest along the way—and then ascend several painter's ladders to the crystal ledge. A short drop down, and I have the golden skull in my hands. The monk sentry swoops down to get me, but I find that by lowering down to the cavern floor and rushing for the step ladder, I can fake him out. While I loop up the center, he drops down to the southwest, so I'm safe to continue my raid in the crystal enclosure.
4. After I empty the enclosure, I cross east on the jungle beam and land on the central crystal tier. With my laser blaster, I clear an entry hole to a crystal ledge. Dropping through, I land on a stack of gold bars. *Ping*, goes the cash register. Looping east, I drop down a painter's ladder and snatch a gold coin on the way.
5. A treasure chest lies on the cavern floor. I debate whether to get it. Two monk sentries watch my every movement, and I can tell by the look in their beady eyes that they plan to tackle me to the ground and pound me senseless. I decide to go for it. I clear away an access hole and land in a patch of turf tar. I grope for the treasure chest and make contact before the two monks can intercept me, then turn west toward the step ladder. I should trap the lone monk sentry on the landing, but I'm feeling bold and lunge for the long ladder. I make it in time and loop back to the central crystal tier.
6. From the rooftop ledge, I can see that one of the eastern monk sentries has left behind gold bars in a rather awkward location on the

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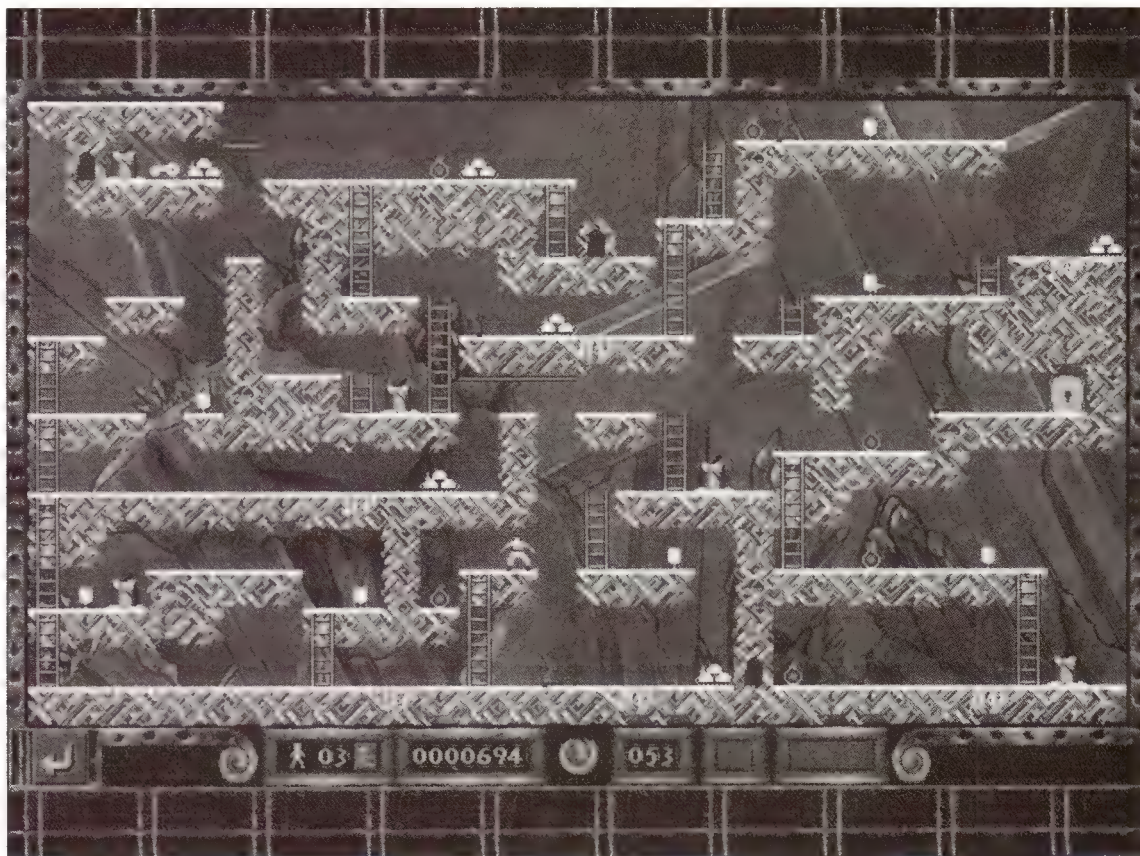
cavern floor. I now stand on the top crystal ledge in the northeastern corner; I'll have to retrieve them later and focus now on the bul-
lion closer at hand. I dash over the crystal ledge and drop through
the eastern chute, plucking two gold coins from their roost. I then
center myself on a ledge directly over the two monks. I position a
small bomb on a patch of turf tar. The blast wipes out the lead monk
but leaves the second unharmed. Dropping down an existing gap, I
trap the second monk and hop overhead.

7. I reclaim the treasure chest and hook a small bomb on my belt, then
descend a painter's ladder toward the cavern floor. Now I'll have to
figure out some way to take back the misplaced gold ingots without
putting myself at serious risk. At the end of the little cavern, I blast
through the floor and drop down to a familiar spot: where I first found
the gold coin at the foot of the ladder. A second blast vacates a pas-
sage to the cavern floor as the last gold finally comes within reach.
8. As I stretch through the turf tar, I capture the last gold in the cavern,
but my two antagonists swerve down rapidly, like twin hawks. I
have no shortage of small bombs, and the bedrock could easily
withstand the blast, but I elect to withdraw into the hideout instead.
The monks pass right by me, and I dash east to the red vault door,
where the red key awaits use. After I unlock the door, I dive into the
crystal green conveyance.

LEVEL 53

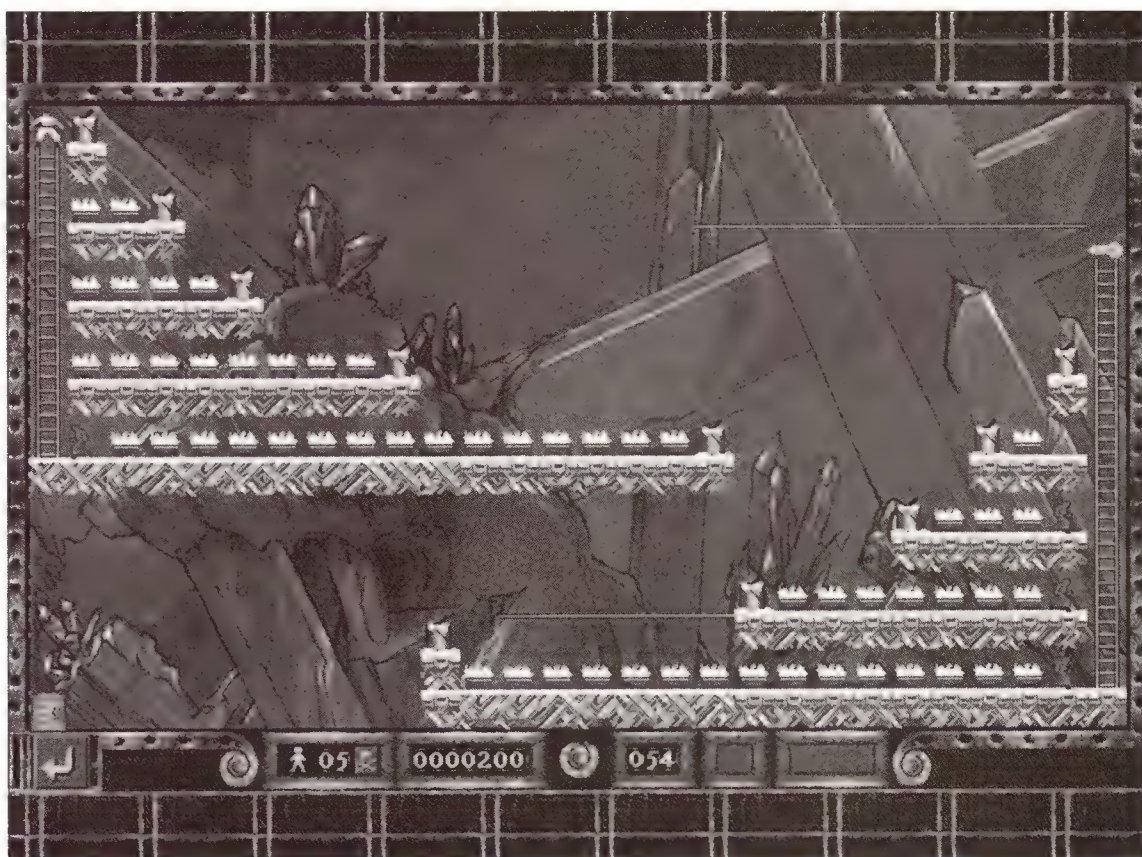
In one respect, this lateral maze has a lot in common with the previous
one. But this time I travel in a counterclockwise direction around the cav-
ern, methodically cleaning up one quadrant at a time. That's one good
thing about lateral mazes: their very layout makes it possible to attack one
quadrant at a time in either a clockwise or counterclockwise direction.

1. From my starting stance, I dare not move down from the small ledge
until the monk rover clears west of the first patch of turf tar. When
he does so, I leap off to the cavern floor and run east to pick up the
first stack of gold bars. I could keep running, but I choose to retreat
into the hideout. There I wait until all four monks congregate at the

**LEVEL 53**

- top of the western long ladder. When I emerge, I have the whole southeast quadrant to myself. I grab a small bomb and make for the painter's ladder that rises from the cavern floor.
2. I spot a gold coin on a small ledge but skip it for now because of the approaching Mongol hoards. I don't bother grabbing the slime bucket, although conceivably I could delay the four monks with newly applied turf tar. But I'm anxious to get to the northeastern quadrant, so I ascend a series of three painter's ladders and traverse the central jungle beam west. On the crystal tier that runs along the bottom of the quadrant, I pick up a stack of gold bars. On the roof ridge, I find a gold coin.

-
3. I leap over the edge and seize a stack of gold bars, then turn around and hop down to a lower ledge to retrieve a gold coin. The gold coin that I left behind earlier now comes into view. With the monks safely set on the western long ladder, I descend the ladder above that narrow ledge and scoop up the coin.
 4. I've now finished my eastern sweep of the cavern. Rising up the succession of painter's ladders, I return to the jungle beam that marks the approximate center of the cavern and aim now for the northwestern quadrant. The roof ledges resemble the top half of a crushed letter 'X'. I cross the crux of it and ascend the northwest diagonal when all of a sudden I tumble down through trap-door turf. Of course I land on my feet, but the small bomb was obviously set as a decoy to draw me toward it. I find a second ladder farther west and climb it to the corner. Inside a little cavern, I discover gold bars, a red key, and a slime bucket. I take the first two but pass on the third. It's impossible to carry more than one tool at a time, so it's either the key or the slime bucket. The key is more important.
 5. I fly down through the gap to a crystal tier that borders the top of the southwestern quadrant, the last section to raid. The four monks have been waiting for me on the western long ladder, so I plant a small bomb on the terrace. The blast incinerates all four of them and clears a nice path to the gold coin in the southwest corner. First, I snag the stack of ingots at the end of the terrace, then descend to the gold coin. From the long ladder, I sidestep toward the coin, then drop down to the cavern floor.
 6. Before I steal the last gold coin, I blast a trench three squares wide on the cavern floor. I could have used a bomb, but I want to be certain the monks stay on the western fringe and don't start raining down from above or reincarnating in front of me. After taking the coin, I blast an exit hole in the ledge. A fourth monk outwits me and almost pounces on me on the cavern floor, but I ensnare him in the crystal turf just in time. I then climb a series of painter's ladders to the golden vault door and fall through the angelic spray.



LEVEL 54

LEVEL 54

The guy who designed this cavern either has a fixation with triangles or a fetish for slime buckets. The briefest of miscalculations spells certain doom, but it's much more than a race. It's an exercise in diversionary tactics against four very aggressive monks.

1. To gather up all the treasure on the western ridges—so-called because they're connected only to one side rather than two and are too long to be ledges—I pour slime on each one. From the pinnacle, I grab the first slime bucket and pour it on the ridge below. On each ridge, the monk sentry gets stuck in the slime, and every time I drop down to the ridge below and hurl fresh slime to trap him once again, I collect gold at the same time.

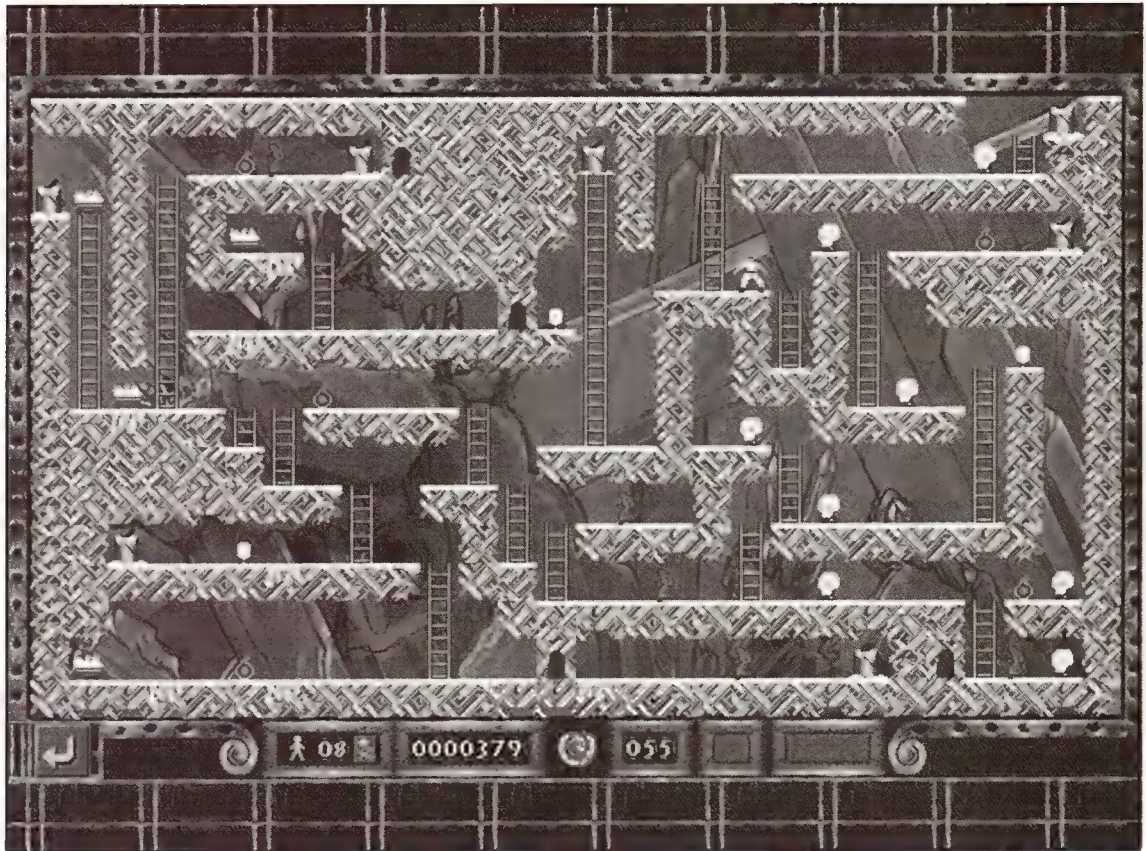
2. On the bottom ridge, the longest one, I throw slime in two places: close to the ladder, and farther out near the edge. I then jump over the lip and start on the eastern triangle. When I land, I make a kamikaze run along the second ridge until I grab the last treasure chest. I'm tempted to squirt breath freshener into the open mouth of the lead monk, but turn around and bait the three monks at the end of the ridge.
3. The three monks follow me over the edge to the end of the crystal floor. I don't have time yet to collect the remaining treasure chests due west. I'll postpone that for later. Meanwhile, the first monk comes closer and closer to the lip of the western triangle. I don't want him to join his cohorts on this side of the cavern, at least not yet. I find that when I race up the long ladder to the third ridge, he makes an about face.
4. I then sweep up the gold off the fourth ridge. At the top of the eastern long ladder, I draw the three red monks, traverse west along the jungle beam, and drop down to the fourth ridge to collect the slime bucket. I don't pick up the green key at the top of the ladder for a very good reason: in the Evil Empire, you can only carry one tool at a time. I decide to leave it there. Meanwhile, I drop down to the second ridge and chuck slime over the inner portion of the second ridge.
5. The next stage of this tour involves coating the second ridge completely, from the ladder to the lip. I grab a slime bucket at the lip and hurl toward the monk swarm. My aim is a little off, but no matter. Luring them deeper into the slime bog, I loop around and climb up the long ladder, where I find another slime bucket on the tiny ridge on top. If I hop down to the second ridge, I risk getting attacked from above, so I continue up to the jungle beam and then drop down to the second ridge.
6. Since I still need to cover the outer exposed area, I loop up for a final slime bucket run and drop down to the second ridge. Remember that each time I climb the long ladder, I have to draw the monks to the outer edge of the second ridge before running east along the crystal floor. Anyway, this time I face outward and finish the task of coating the second ridge.

7. At some point, the first red monk joins the other three on this side. I don't know when it happened exactly, but I would have preferred it if he had stayed where he belonged on the other side. In any event, I now have the opportunity to dangle out to the extreme end of the lower jungle beam and clean up the remainder of the treasure. Starting with the last one and running east toward the long ladder saves time. I just barely make it past the first monk as he drops down over the lip and just past the rear-guard monk as I climb the eastern long ladder.
8. Ladders form under the chin of the lower western ridge, signaling that the last bit of gold has been taken. I grab the key at the top of the eastern long ladder, then traverse west across the upper jungle beam. Falling, I come back to the lower western ridge and blast an escape hole just over the bedrock-capped tuft below, which still bears an unused slime bucket. I won't be needing it now, though, as I drop down to the cavern floor and rush to the green vault door, key in hand.

LEVEL 55

This crystal cavern uses a lateral maze to baffle intruders. Five mad monks add to the difficulty, but even with the odds stacked against me, I begin to feel right at home in these mazes. I'm starting to get the hang of outwitting the monks in order to steal their treasure.

1. I ascend the painter's ladder to the upper tier and run east. After packing the golden skull, I blast an access hole to the ledge below and swipe the second golden skull of its crystal pedestal.
2. At the bottom of an "L"-shaped formation, I purloin another golden skull. A lone monk tries to get me but falls instead into the pit I made for him. I then snatch up the gold coin at the top of a crystal pedestal and descend the painter's ladder to the ledge below. The persistent monk tries to nab me again but falls into a second trap. I rob another golden skull from a small loft and then hop over the monk's head.

**LEVEL 55**

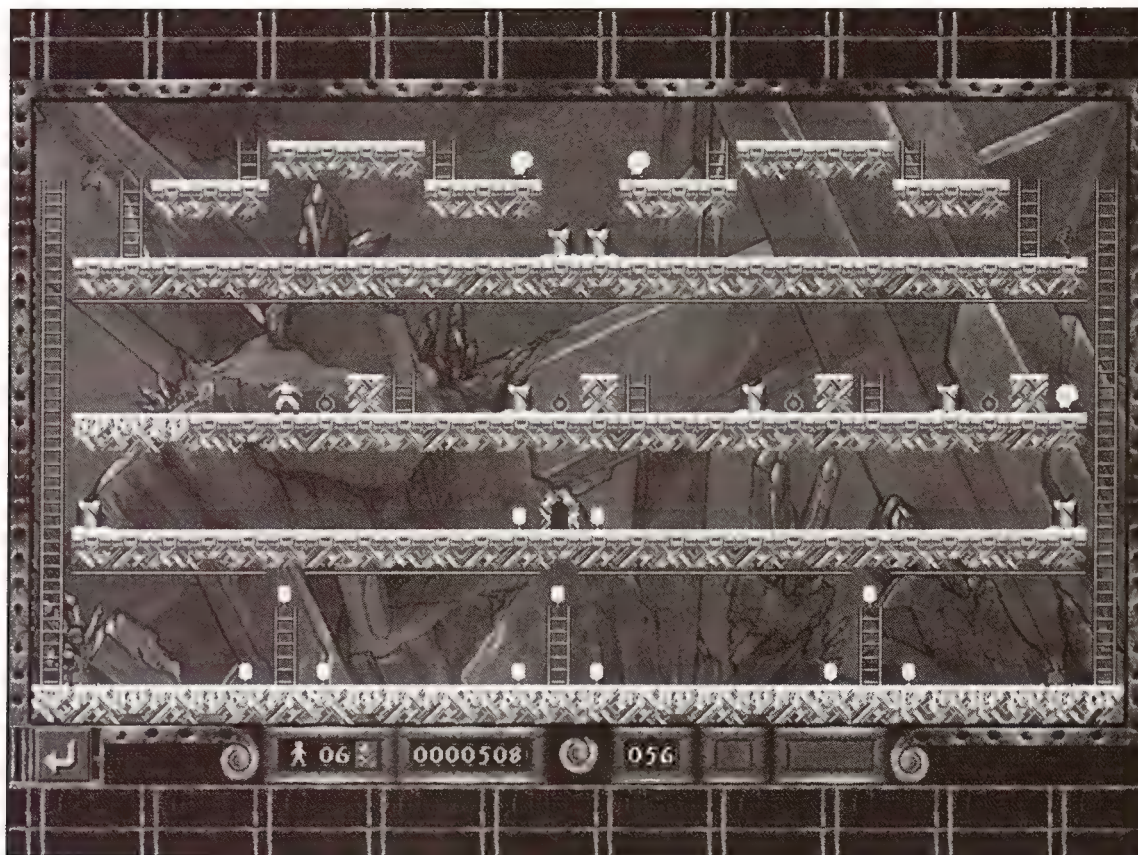
3. I float down the eastern shaft, pilfer two golden skulls, and hook a small bomb to my belt. The monk heat gets very heavy, so I pull into a 24-hour hideout and wait for them to clear the area. As they vacate, one leaves a golden treasure chest on a ledge above. Responding quickly, I clamber up to the ledge, take the goods, and then descend to a dead-end tunnel. There, I blast an exit hole and drop to the cavern floor.
4. I run to the southwestern corner, capture a treasure chest, then climb to the ledge above and snatch a gold coin. From here, I work my way up several painter's ladders to the northwestern quadrant, where I find gold in abundance. A monk starts to harass me, however, so I leave a small bomb greeting for him on the landing. Touchdown!

5. Stepping over the wreckage, I climb up a painter's ladder to a "C"-shaped small cavern where a treasure chest lies. Jumping down, I clear away turf with my laser blaster and drop down to a crystal ledge that contains a gold coin. There's the small matter of a stray golden skull down below, in roughly the same spot where I fetched the treasure chest before. To get past the monk troops, I detonate a small bomb. Two get transferred to the southwestern quadrant, and two fall into a turf trench to get eaten alive.
6. Free at last, I lunge for the golden skull and then, surprised to find it so centrally located, turn toward the turquoise veil.

LEVEL 56

Three solid tiers run parallel to the cavern floor, which is completely coated with turf tar. Two long ladders run up the east and west boundaries. Curve-shaped ledges dot the rooftop like human eyebrows. Whatever else you say about the eleventh crystal cavern, it certainly has a striking symmetry about it, and a refreshing change from the rash of mazes I've just plundered. But while it lacks the twists and turns of a maze, it has a unique set of challenges all its own.

1. I begin on the middle tier. My mission starts with a blast through a series of retaining walls. The small bombs are plentiful and handy. After the first explosion, I throw slime at the approaching monks to slow them down while I wait for the retaining wall to grow back and for the second blast to go off. As soon as the retaining wall grows back, I have considerably more freedom to work my way east. I pick up a slime bucket for future use.
2. When I come to the last retaining wall, the blast catches a curious monk, dashing him out of the way so I can descend to the next tier. Two gold coins straddle a hideout. I get there before the monks, then turn around. If I were cornered, I might duck into the hideout, but since the way is clear, I run back and ascend the eastern long ladder to the right "eyebrow" ledge. The inner curve holds a golden skull, which I easily claim.

**LEVEL 56**

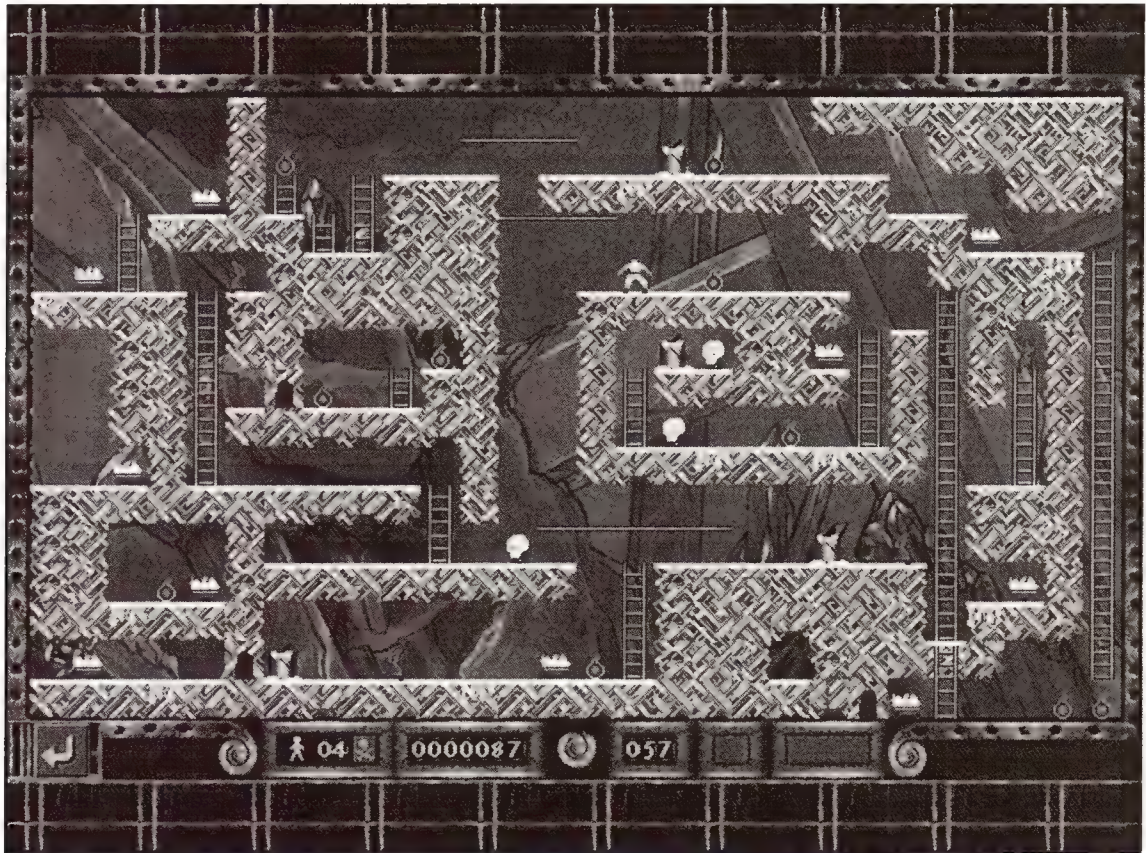
3. Dropping down to the top tier, I approach the monks and surprise them with the slime bucket I picked up earlier. Two more slime buckets stand nearby, so I fling their contents near the first. This technique will prove useful later on, since it slows their progress from the western boundary to the eastern one. I then run down to the first tier and retreat into the hideout, where I wait until all the monks cluster at the top of the western long ladder.
4. Seeing my chance, I sprint east, descend the eastern long ladder, and then traverse the hand-over-hand bar as far west as I can without bringing harm to myself. I stop just shy of the last gold coin and begin a methodical sweep of the cavern floor's gold coins. Turf tar, it turns out, is one of my most effective weapons against the red monks. I'll have to come back for the last coin later.

5. I lure the monks toward the base of the eastern long ladder. Then I break away and sprint west along the first tier toward the western long ladder. At the top of the ladder, I wait for the lead monk, the only one to bother coming after me. When he comes, I hop over the western 'eyebrow' and retrieve the golden skull.
6. I find another slime bucket and further detain the lead monk. While he struggles through the slop, I wait for the other monks on the cavern floor to make their way west. I note that one among them has dropped the final gold coin. At the last moment, I dash down the eastern long ladder and traverse the hand-over-hand bar. Dropping down, I scoop up the last coin and head east, only to find that the lead monk has climbed down from the rooftop tier and planned to cut me off.
7. I drop down to the turf tar. As the monk does so, I clamber up the painter's ladder and beam-surf overhead. With no further obstacles, I scamper up the eastern long ladder like a black panther heading for the treetops.

LEVEL 57

At long last: a complex maze! Like Lancelot searching for the perfect warrior with whom to parry, I now find my perfect match in this battle of wits. Unlike the lateral mazes I've encountered, where I can cover each part in neat, individual quadrants, this one defies my usual methodical sweeps. Partly, this is because of a system of chambers and enclosures that force me to make vertical sweeps as well as horizontal ones. The mad monks complete the challenge, but after it all, I feel stronger and more valiant for having finished the struggle victorious!

1. I stand above a mid-sized chamber that reminds me of a raspberry Danish. I plunder the gold without harassment and blast an exit hole in the western corner.
2. I cross the parallel beam west and rip off a golden skull. A maniacal monk tries to grab me by the ankles, but I blast a turf pit and trample him underfoot.

**LEVEL 57**

3. I ascend a painter's ladder and run west across a ridge to a second taller painter's ladder. The maniacal monks, meanwhile, huddle on the eastern frontier and hatch diabolical plans for my removal. Unfazed, I complete my rout of the northwest corner, taking two treasure chests and carving an entry hole through the rooftop of a large crystal enclosure.
4. I blast an exit hole in the corner of the chamber and take the treasure chest along. I find another treasure chest in the chamber directly below, and in the southwestern part of the cavern, yet another. So now I've returned here, much the richer for it. But the maniacal gang of four has become alerted to my whereabouts and seems intent on executing its plan to get rid of me.
5. I'm not a very patient fellow, I admit, but spending some time in the hideout does accomplish my main objective: to send the red monks back to the eastern ladder from whence they came. I then traverse

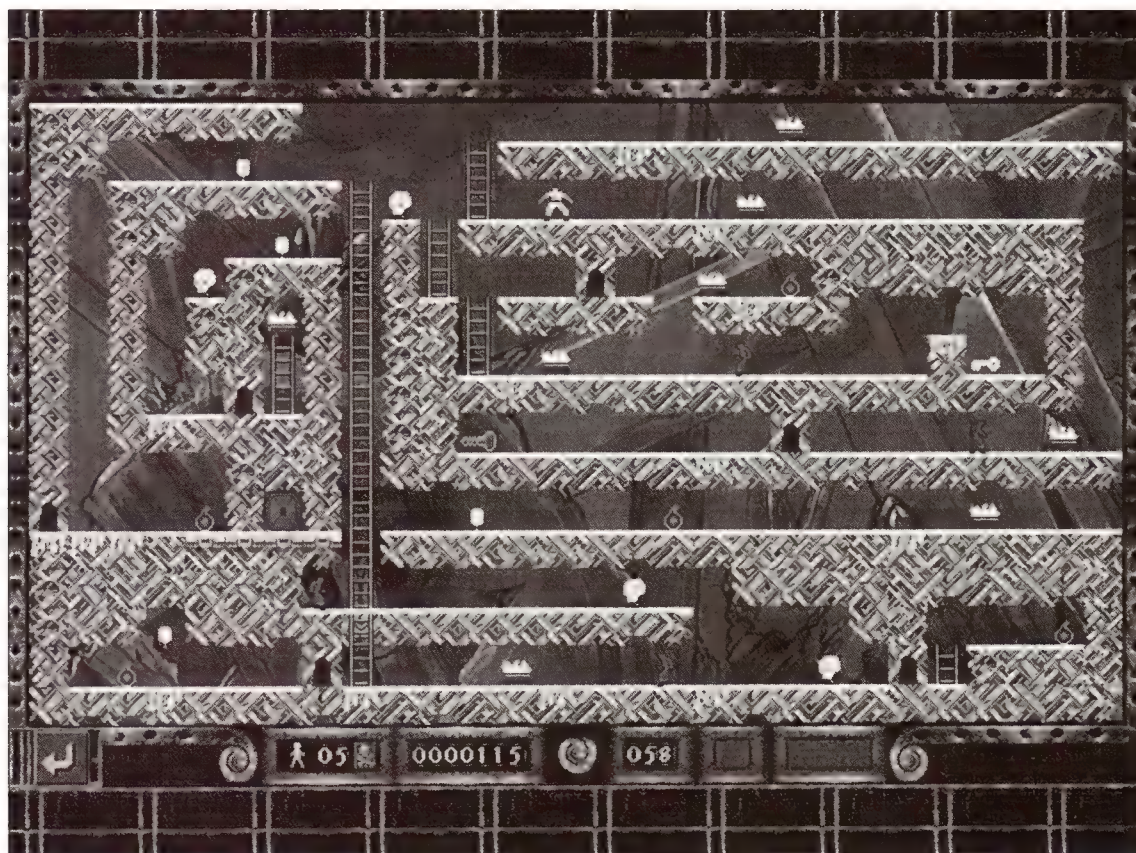
the monkey bar (that's my new term for the jungle beam) and trap a monk scout in the crystal turf. Descending the long ladder, I jump sideways into a tiny alcove where the monks left a treasure chest. How kind of them.

6. I step down from the ladder to steal a treasure chest on the cavern floor, then climb back up the same long ladder. I fully expect the monks to come charging after me, but surprisingly they don't. I guess all that time in the hideout has made them somewhat complacent, or maybe they're just filing their claws. I step off the long ladder about midway up and run east over a ledge to a painter's ladder that dead-ends inside a crystal bower. No, I didn't come here to admire the crystal formations. Instead, I plant a small bomb at the head of the ladder and retreat down to the bottom. The blast reminds me of a beautiful marigold sunrise.
7. The blast clears a little walkway to the outer long ladder, which I ascend to get the last remaining gold item in the cavern, a treasure chest. The confounded gray exit door appears deep in the heart of a crystal block that I have tread several times since the beginning of this tour. The best tactic for getting there, I reason, is to scale down the outer long ladder to the bottom. Two small bombs sit there, thanks to Providence. I use them both: the first blast takes out two monks, and the second just barely catches the third.
8. Believing the way to be clear, I climb up the inner long ladder and cross west to the top of the crystal block. I set a small bomb directly over the gray exit door. The blast catches an unwitting monk, and I pull a lame cannonball tuck into the small pool below.

LEVEL 58

The thirteenth cavern in the Crystal Hoard series uses a lateral maze motif. For those of you who'd rather not learn about motifs, this cavern is a step up in difficulty from the previous lateral-maze caverns, but with a few surprising twists that make it worth the price of admission.

1. I lunge west and pick up a golden skull on my way to the rooftop of the raspberry truffle. Through a series of carefully aimed blasts, I

**LEVEL 58**

add a gold coin, a treasure chest, and a second golden skull to my coffers.

2. Exiting the chamber, I land on a small bomb, which I use to blast my way down to the cavern floor. The blast punches through two crystal turf squares. As I drop through the chute, I snatch a gold coin in midair, in a dazzling display of dexterity. Some monks approach from the east, but my second (and last) small bomb dispenses with that threat, at least temporarily.
3. I pass a long ladder as I run east toward a golden skull. A monk comes down the same ladder. I intercept him with a turf pit, and by the time I return, he's already floundering therein. I then climb up to the next ridge, where I find a second golden skull for the taking.
4. I return to the long ladder and rise to the crystal tier that spans almost the entire breadth of the cavern. There, I find a gold coin, a small bomb, and a treasure chest while running in an easterly direction, but as I return back to the ladder, I have a minor altercation

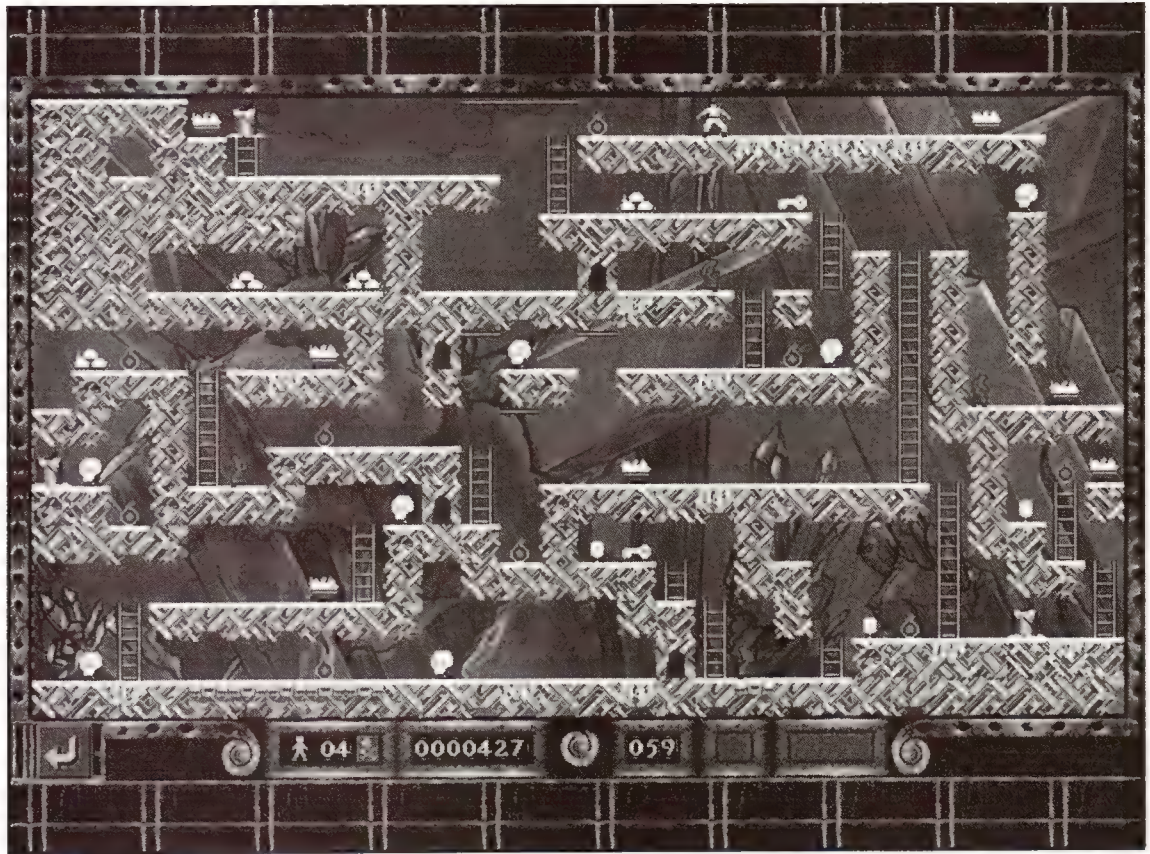
with a certain malevolent monk. He drops into a turf pit, and I scramble up the long ladder to the northeastern quadrant.

5. I hate it when monks steal. It's the worst sort of hypocrisy. In any case, I relieve my maniacal friend of his golden burden with a well-placed turf pit on the upper ridge. I then make a series of vertical incisions with my laser shooter, catching treasure chests from every ledge. That leaves me with just one more treasure chest and additional run-ins with the red diabolical brothers.
6. The monk on the next level falls sidelong into a turf pit while I seize the last bit of gold, a treasure chest. I realize I forgot to take the red key on the level just above, but then a gray exit door materializes in a rather convenient place, so the key isn't even missed. I forge a trench with my blaster and stomp over the heads of two marauding brothers as I rocket up along the long ladder.
7. I sprint east to the very end of a long terrace, the likes of which I've seen before, and excavate a descending series of two. After the last pull, I drop through the gap and disappear into the apocryphal mist.

LEVEL 59

Yet another lateral labyrinth. It surpasses the others in the Crystal Hoard in both complexity and surprises. And while my wits save me through more than one scuffle, I also rely heavily on my reflexes, especially when it comes to trapping monks in close quarters.

1. From the top ridge, I curve down to steal a pile of ingots, then loop back again with a mad monk in hot pursuit. Pulling my feet through the tar turf, I emerge near the lip of the ridge, where I collect a treasure chest. I fire at the lip of the ridge to clear the way down to a crystal pedestal that bears a golden skull.
2. I leap off the pedestal and land inside a small enclosure. My reflexes don't fail me as I back up against the eastern wall and prepare a trap for the monk sentry. I then step on his head and clear away an exit hole just adjacent to him. Flying through the gap, I pick up a gold coin on the way down, in the company of a small bomb and a treasure chest.



LEVEL 59

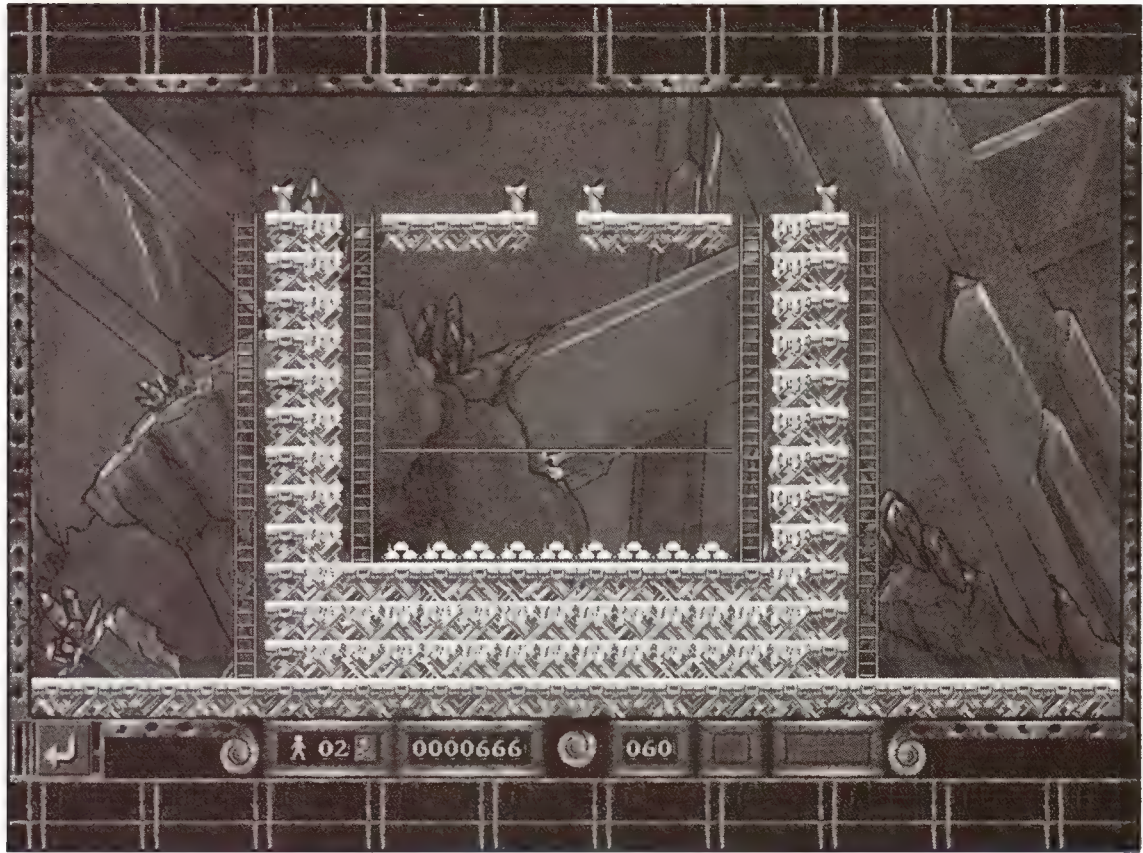
3. I land on a terrace in the southeastern portion of the cavern. As I run west, I collect a small bomb and a gold coin. A monk sentry sees me invading his jurisdiction and tries to wrestle me to the ground, but I fire off a quick turf trap to keep him at bay. I have to be careful here because there's crystal bedrock and turf tar that are blast-proof. I have to aim right at the one exposed area of turf to trap the monk, or else slip into the hideout. Since the trap succeeds, I ascend several ladders to a cavern-loft and snatch a gold coin. The key is of no interest.
4. I slip through the blast hole and bolt west across the cavern floor, picking up a golden skull in the southwestern corner. On the next ledge up, I find a treasure chest and a ladder that leads me near a second golden skull. I take all three, but I don't plan to stay in this quadrant for long as I continue my diagonal ascent.

5. Crossing a short monkey bar, I drop down to a crystal tier and suck up a treasure chest. I ascend a painter's ladder at the end of the tier that leads me over an "L"-joint. Two golden skulls reside in this little crystal cavern, and I steal them doing a mixture of running and swinging.
6. I double back and ascend the painter's ladder. The local red monk in these parts smells the blood of Jake Peril, so I waste no time crossing the network of monkey bars to the northwest corner of the cavern. Dropping down to a chamber roof, I blast a security trap to protect my behind as I take away the treasure chest in the upper loft.
7. I then slip through the exit hole and find myself in a new chamber with stacks of gold ingots. The monk in the low-ceilinged chamber below presents a snag. I could place the bomb at any of several points, but I choose to place it directly overhead. The edge of the blast consumes him, clearing a nice path for me while fumigating the area of monk germs. I grab the treasure chest. Using my laser blaster, I access more gold ingots and a golden skull.
8. I'm falling through trap-door turf to the cavern floor when I hear the gray exit door materialize in the center of the cavern. I run east up a series of painter's ladders across a crystal tier. I have to trap two monks first, then dash over their heads and fire an entry into the swirling amethyst.

LEVEL 60

What do you call this? A horseshoe? A bowl? '90s architecture? Something a little kid brought home from art class? This truly is an odd structure. I figure it has to be the product of an alien intelligence. I throw a lot of slime and do a lot of running up and down ladders. And the slime flows.

1. The first order of business involves vacuuming the floor of all the gold ingots. Two still remain, but they're both in monk possession: one on the eastern side and one on the western side. I run up the eastern ladder, retrieve a slime bucket, and begin the first stage of the slime spill.
2. The monks watch from the other sides as I climb up to the top another time—careful, mind you, not to draw them into the interior—



LEVEL 60

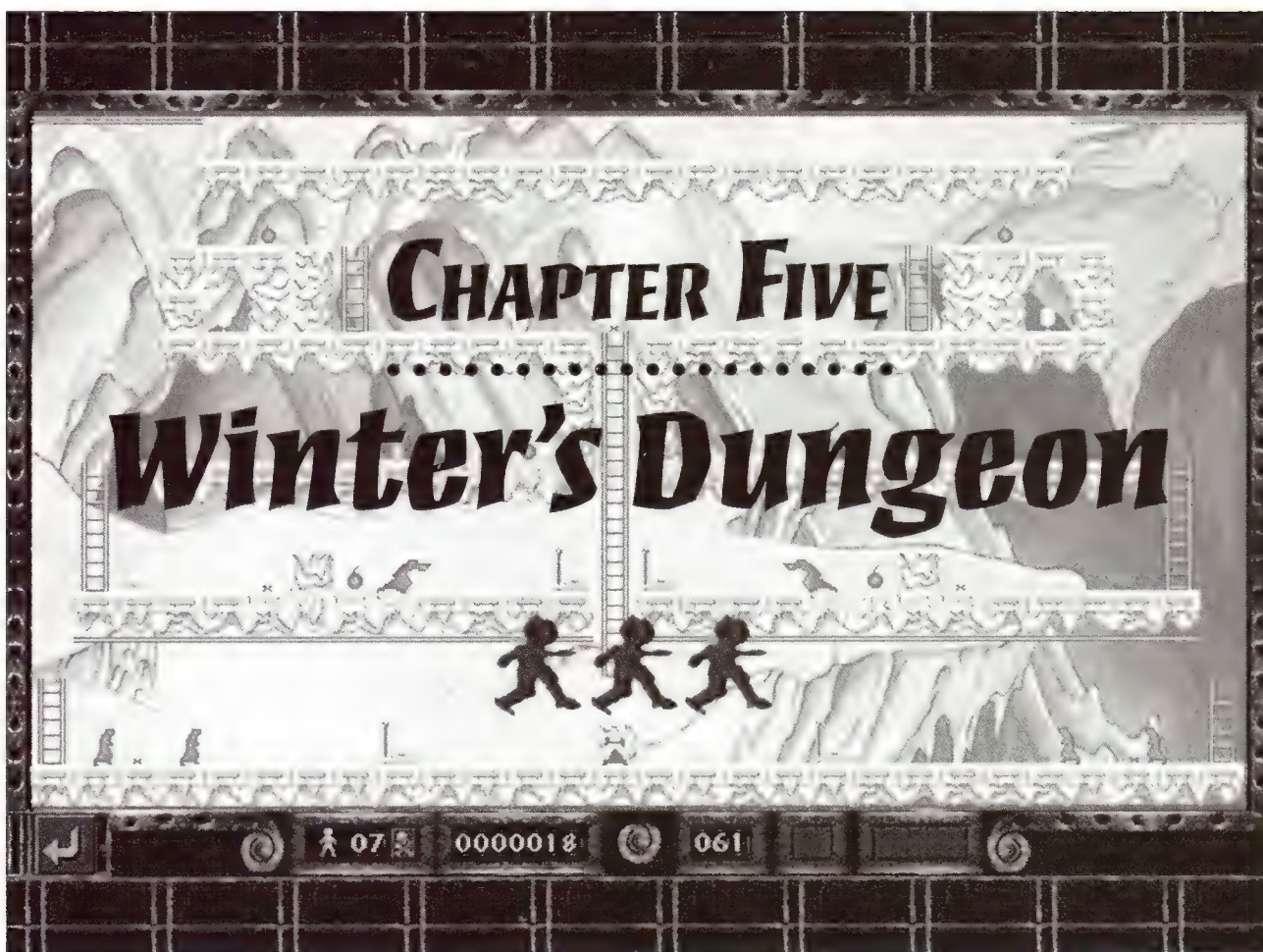
and take down another bucket. Splash! The ooze covers the middle portion of the horseshoe floor, and now I need only one more bucket to complete the party preparations.

3. With the floor of the horseshoe primed, I invite down my first two monk guests from the eastern quarter. They happily oblige as they follow me down the interior ladder. I draw them down into the muck, and as they come toward me for the first dance, the rear monk drops his wallet—or, should I say, his stack of gold bars?
4. I draw the monks to the western side of the “U”-shaped party hall, then traverse the monkey bar to the gold ingots. I wait for the monks to come to the eastern side, stating how happy I am to relieve them of their financial burdens, and then cross the hand-over-hand bar and scale up the western ladder to invite my next round of guests from the western side.

5. For many hours, it seems—although it was, in fact, only 5 minutes or so—I march my guests back and forth, trying to shake the last gold ingots loose onto the turf tar. When it finally happens, I draw them to the western side while I cross overhead via the monkey bar to the eastern ladder. As I rise, they rise, until I have all the festive brothers on one side and me on the other. I then run to the center aperture and drop on top of the last item of gold.
6. The heavenly chimes ring forth. Twin gray exit doors appear in opposite southern corners. I opt for the eastern exit and travel to it richly satisfied, in an intensely jovial mood. Unfortunately, the party host has departed early, leaving his guests in a somewhat dejected mood.

CONCLUSION

I bid adieu to the Crystal Hoard and add extra layers of clothing for my next adventures in the Winter's Dungeon.



My family comes from Denmark. My ancestors were Vikings. One of my aunts, in fact, researched our genealogy and discovered that we're all related to Leif Eriksson. My last name used to be Perilsson before the officials at Ellis Island urged my great-grandfather to Americanize it. In other words, thick blood and the thieving instinct run in the family. That's why the frigid climes of the Winter's Dungeon, on a deep subconscious level at least, remind me of home.

The ice caverns of the Winter's Dungeon support no life. No moss or fungus grows here. Glacial cliffs span overhead, deep icy crevasses below. The turf in this world consists of ice crystals that generate fantastic turf formations. Fortunately, my laser blaster still works just as it did in the other kingdoms.

With every world, I look forward to a new device with which to entrap, delay, or detain my relentless antagonists. In the Winter's Dungeon, I discover the many uses of a new type of tool: the *mad*

monk snare. This proves extremely effective at disabling the mad monks. If one steps into the trap, the loop of the snare slips around his ankles and hoists him upside down. Rendered powerless, the monk can't seize hold of me if I walk past, and any gold falls abruptly to the ground. These traps last for the duration of my stay in the cavern, and they're equally effective on wide surfaces, like ice turf, or narrow ones, like a ladder rung. In that sense, they're like small bombs: I can position them on virtually any flat level surface.

As a rule of thumb, if I can fit in a space, so can a mad monk snare. I still have other tools and resources at my disposal: small bombs, hideouts, and slime buckets. But I find the mad monk snares particularly useful in whittling down the ranks of my enemy.

Caution: Use Only as Directed

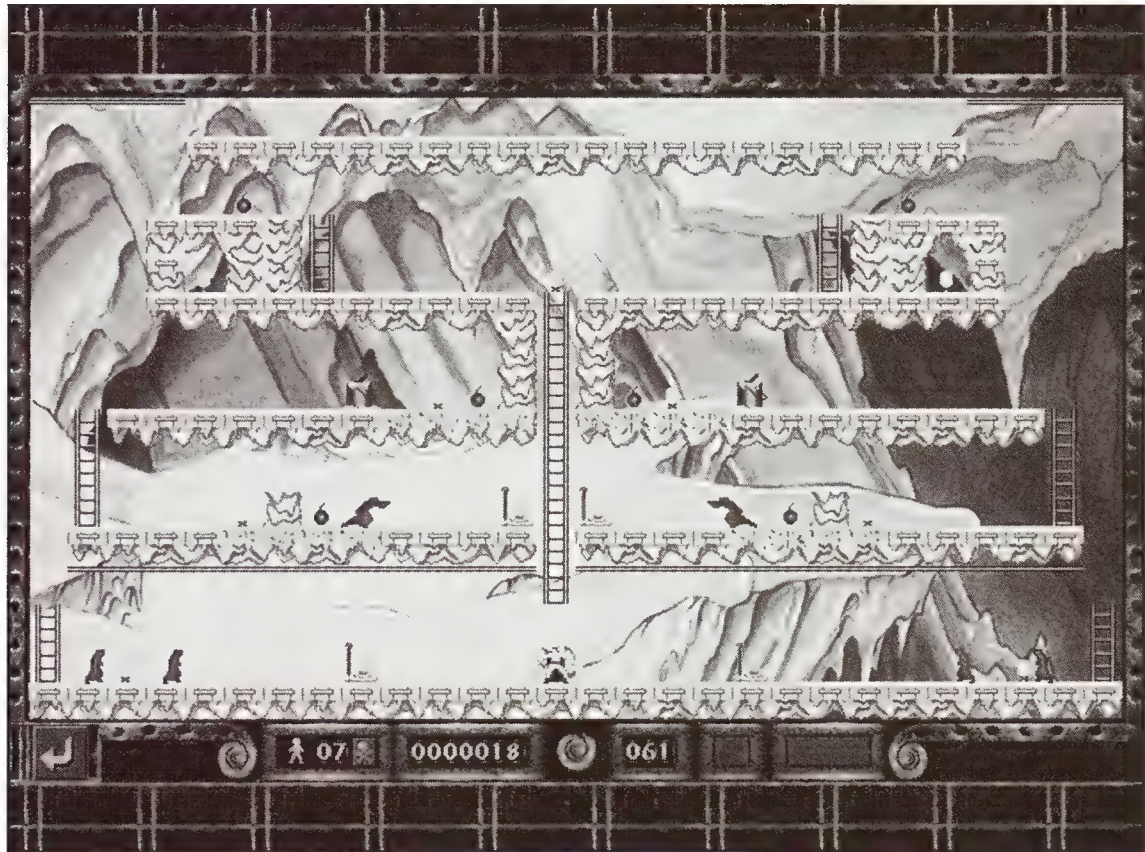
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I love using the mad monk snares, but they have two disadvantages. For one, they take time and skill to use. Where I can blast away turf in one beat, setting up a snare can easily take three. In practice, then, I have to make sure that I have enough lead time to set up the trap. Secondly, I can get caught in the snares, as well. After setting a trap, I have to move away and draw the monk into it: if he approaches from the west, I have to move east, and vice versa. They also have another limitation: as with all my other tools and resources, I can't set a mad monk snare on a hand-over-hand bar.

LEVEL 61

Simple symmetry characterizes the first arctic cavern. Three tiers of bed-rock are equally spaced above the cavern floor. I have four mad monk snares to use against six mad monks, but it's not easy to set them where I find them. Instead, I have to first grab a snare and then run to a place where I have enough time to set it. Small bombs and slime buckets also contribute to my plunder of the first Winter's Dungeon cavern.

1. From my starting stance on the cavern floor, I disappear into the hideout until the six monks migrate to the southwestern corner. I then sprint west to catch my first snare, then run east to set it adjacent to the second snare. After both snares are installed, the two lead monks are upended and begin spinning helplessly.



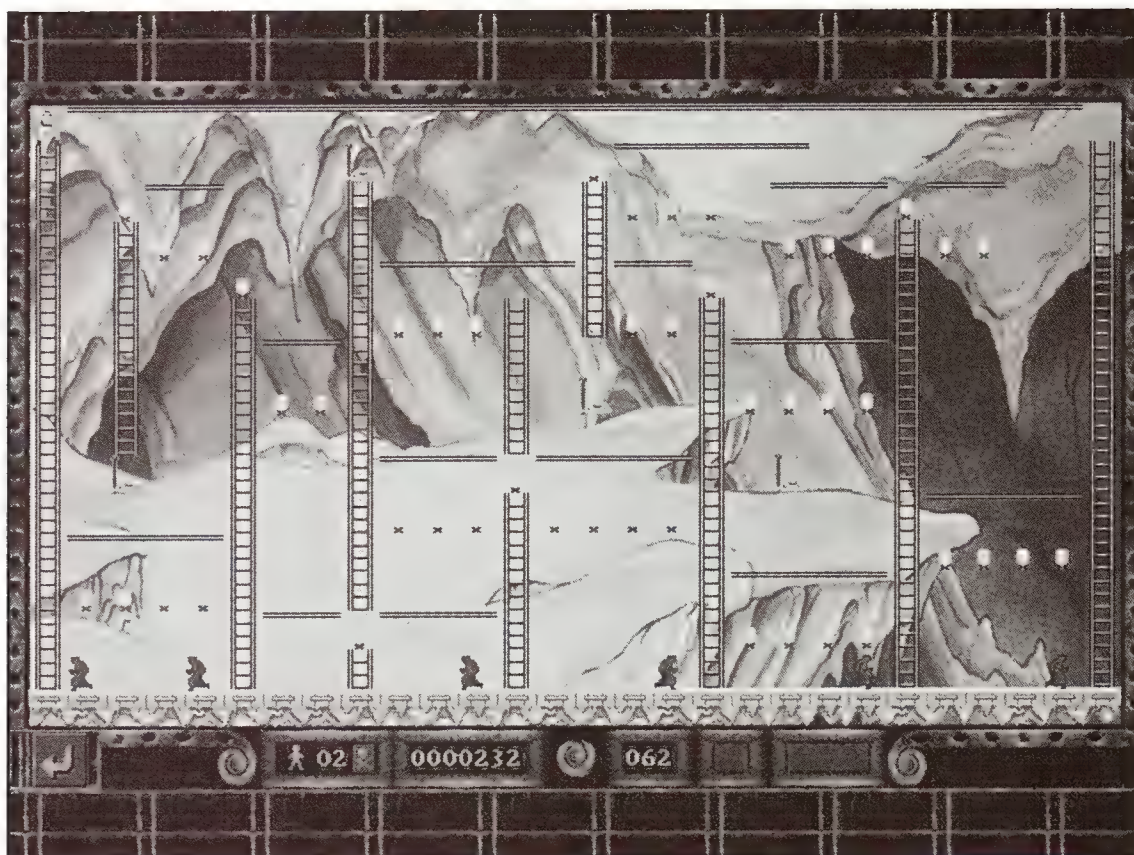
LEVEL 61

2. Two monks down, four to go. But first, I cross the hand-over-hand bar until I pass the rear monk, then drop down to the cavern floor and run west to scoop up a gold coin. The four monks follow me to the southwestern corner. I scale the painter's ladder to the parallel beam and traverse back to the center.
3. Climbing up the central long ladder, I step west and lay a snare for the first unlucky monk to set foot there. A small bomb sits before a retaining wall that guards access to a gold coin on this level and more loot overhead. Without threat from behind, I wait for the blast to clear away the retaining wall, then walk through the turf tar to retrieve the gold token. I then ascend the painter's ladder at the end of the tier and take a gold coin, a small bomb, and a slime bucket. The retaining wall grows back quickly enough to prevent the other monks from following. Instead, all three wait for me on the central long ladder.

4. Three monks down, three to go. I take a running leap and fall along the western boundary. Descending the painter's ladder, I walk forward on the cavern floor and hurl the contents of the slime bucket just as the three remaining monks come toward me. The goop slows them down and brings me some time. I traverse over their heads and ascend the long ladder to the eastern side of the first tier, where I plant another snare for my next intended victim.
5. Like a mirror reflection of the other side, I find a small bomb in front of the retaining wall. Just as a monk sets foot in the snare, the blast clears my right of way. The retaining wall grows back in time to repel a monk as I grab the gold coin, small bomb, and slime bucket on the tier just above. Flying down the eastern flank this time, I then climb down to the cavern floor and empty the slime bucket on the cavern floor.
6. With only two monks remaining, the odds of success increase in my favor. I cross the jungle beam to the central long ladder and ascend to the third tier. I pluck the gold coin off the top rung, then dash west toward the ice enclosure. A small bomb sits on the roof, but I already have plenty in my inventory. The blast clears the way for me to steal the gold coin from inside.
7. Meanwhile, the two monks pace back and forth on the cavern floor. I then turn to the ice enclosure on the opposite side of the third tier and plant a second small bomb. The explosion tears down the wall, and as I rush in to steal the last gold coin, a gray exit door appears on the rooftop tier.
8. I climb over the western ice enclosure and drop down to the third tier, where I sidestep onto the newly formed long ladders. Climbing upward, I reach for the jungle beam and traverse to the rooftop tier, where I dive headlong into the emerald light.

LEVEL 62

Gold coins dot the air like pennies from heaven. The network of ladders and beams reminds me of the ape house at the local zoo. With a cavern floor made of solid bedrock, however, my laser blaster becomes useless



LEVEL 62

in the second Winter's Dungeon. If it weren't for the four snares, I would have found it impossible to pick these golden fruit from their invisible vine.

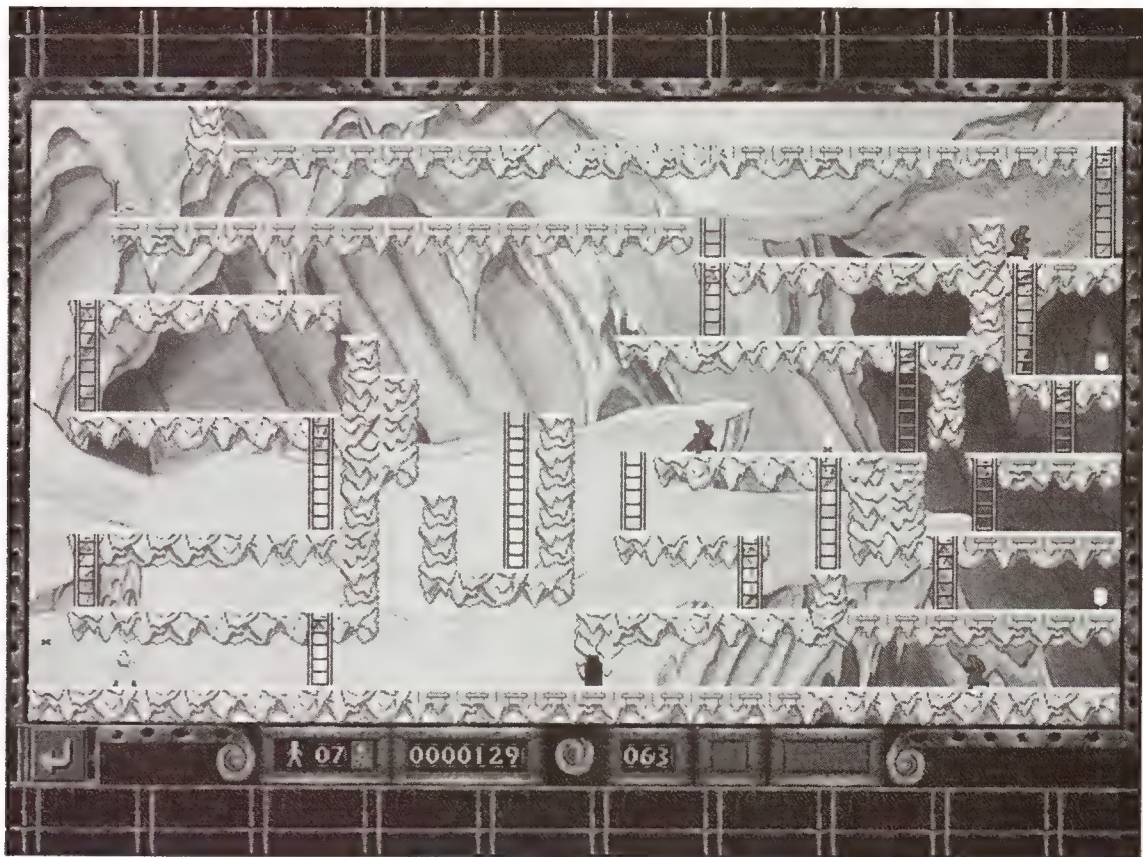
1. I want to eliminate the four monks as quickly as possible. From my starting stance in the northwest corner, I cross the rooftop jungle beam to a painter's ladder that contains an unused snare at the bottom. Landing on the cavern floor, I set the snare and then climb the western long ladder. I find a second snare at the top of a long ladder, which I install in the middle of the cavern floor.
2. Two down, two more to go. The other two snares hang in midair on the eastern half. In mid-flight, I grab the snare and run to the southeastern corner to set it. As the monks approach from the west, I'm careful to step east to avoid my own trap. I then clamber up the eastern long ladder and traverse west across the jungle beam.

3. Only three monks remain, but it becomes dangerous to go after the fourth mad monk snare because of one canny fellow. I resort to dodging tactics—up and down ladders, to and fro across monkey bars—to draw the monks away. Finally, I retrieve the snare and fix it up just west of center. I leap east just before the fourth monk victim gets caught. With four monks dangling, I begin sweeping the cavern of gold coins, starting with a few stray pennies on the western side. I have a close encounter here with one monk, but once I slip past this area the threat diminishes.
4. Gradually, I work my way east. Most of the gold coins are lined up in columns, so it proves to be more efficient to climb up to the roof beam and sweep downward. Some of the gold coins are set off to the side, so I claim them by swinging like a chimpanzee among the smaller squares. The other two monks, meanwhile, confine themselves to the western half.
5. When I pick the last of the golden fruit, the gray exit door arises in the northeastern corner. I climb up the eastern long ladder and vanish without a trace.

LEVEL 63

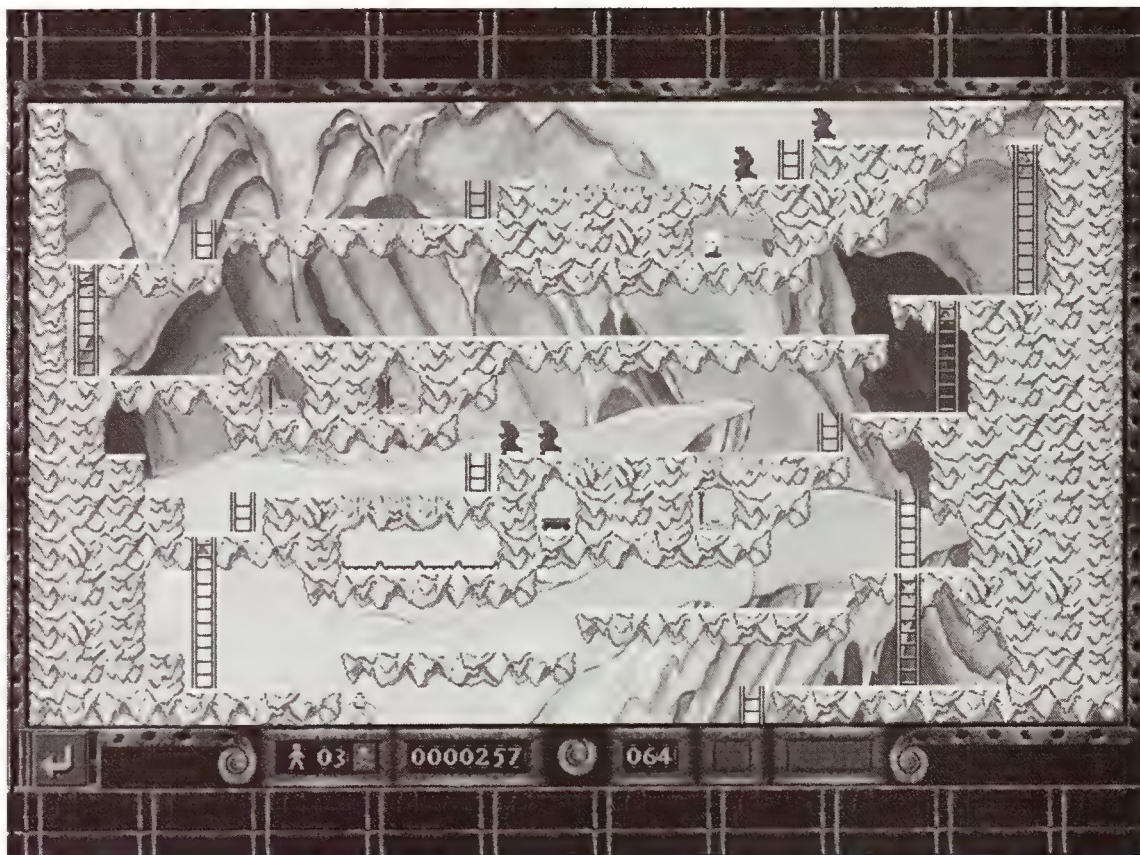
This ice cavern appears to be a simple maze at first, but then its underlying structure surfaces. This dungeon consists of three subsections—western, central, and eastern—each one guarded jealously. To avoid a risk of danger, I try to prevent the monks from getting snuffed in the ice turf because if they do, they'll get reassigned to the eastern sector, complicating my plans for escape.

1. I climb the painter's ladder in the southwestern quadrant and run west across a bedrock ledge, jumping off to collect a coin. A monk sentry falls sidelong into a turf trap I prepare for him, but, in what is a rare moment of empathy for the mad monks, I make sure to draw him out so he won't crush to death. I ascend the switchback to the top ledge and then leap into the curve-shaped well of the "J"-hook.



LEVEL 63

2. Crawling out of the "J"-hook, I drop down into the central sector. Right away, the monk sentry tries to attack, but I detain him with an ice pit. He moves swiftly, so as I zigzag up I clear a second pit for him. This creates a bit more space between us, allowing me enough time to spoon up the two gold coins.
3. At the end of the run, I retrieve the mad monk snare. The mad monk starts approaching the painter's ladder that leads to this bedrock tier, but I hop over his head in time and then fire a turf pit and capture him a third time. I'm careful not to use the snare yet. That can only be used in the third and last sector.
4. Midway up the stairs, a section of ice separate the two subsections. Using the painter's ladder as my axis, I carve an opening with my laser blaster and enter on a bedrock ledge. The feral monk runs toward me, but I catch him in my snare. Looking up, I'm disheartened to see that the monk in the previous sector has fallen into the opening.



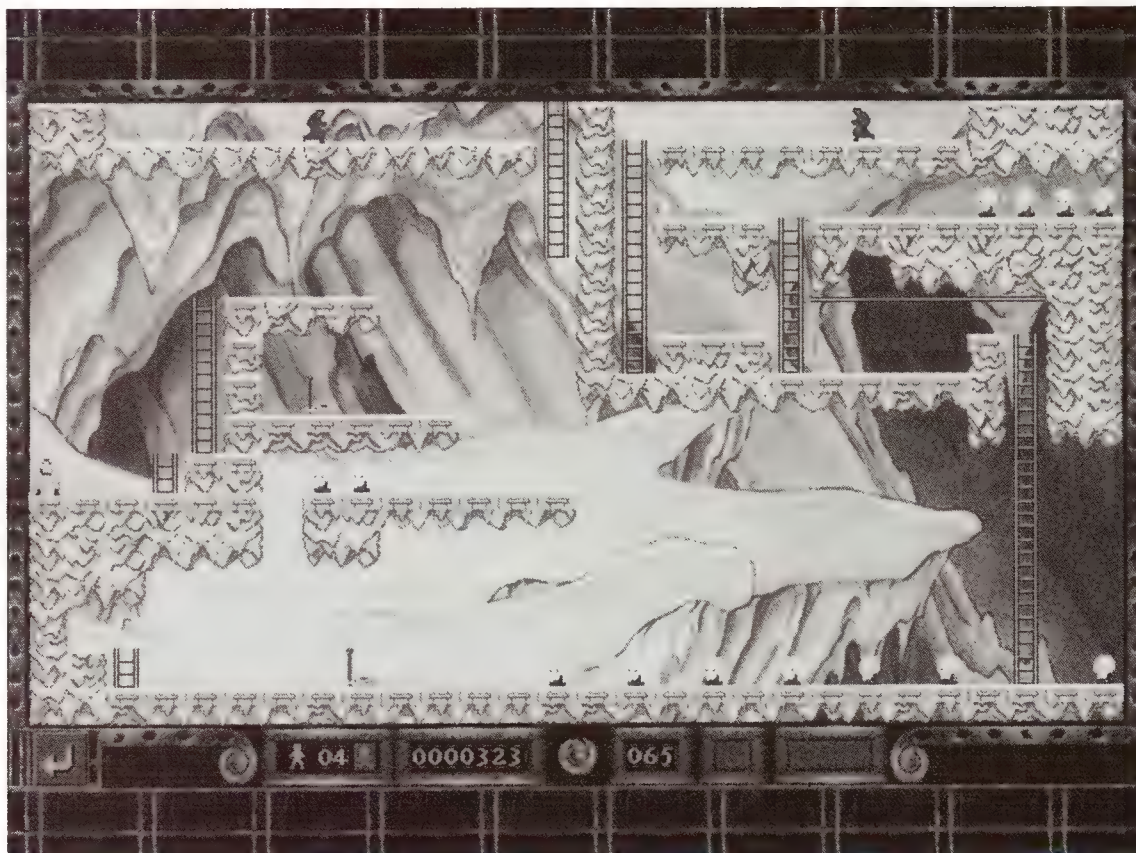
LEVEL 64

5. It's inevitable that he should die and be reborn on the upper tier, which leads directly into the section I now occupy. I retrieve the last gold coin and prompt the gray exit door to open forth. As the monk comes down, I step toward the eastern boundary and fall through trap-door turf. He follows suit and tries to catch me as I run up the eastern switchback to the swirling eddies.

LEVEL 64

I enjoy this brain teaser. All the gold and snares reside inside small enclosures within the ice ledges. There are three snares to be shared among four monks. In addition to placing the snares in precise locations, I also rely on my laser blaster to deter my adversaries.

1. I climb up the step ladder and the painter's ladder in the east, then drop down three broad terraces. I trap the first monk in a turf pit, then hop onto his head to blast a second pit for his wily cohort.
2. In matters of theft, traps come before gold. I have to protect my derriere first. I cut a descending-two series (see explanation in Chapter 1) above the small alcove that houses the mad monk snare and then exit below. The monks come to meet me at the same spot, so I repeat the same trap procedure and scamper overhead.
3. Near the top of the ladder, I install my first snare. As I hear it whip behind me, I forge across turf tar to the roof of another tiny alcove that contains a treasure chest. I'm careful to remove three ice blocks to make sure I can clear an exit.
4. Just adjacent, a wide enclosure contains four stacks of gold ingots. I punch entry with my blaster and sweep them up, then exit through the western corner. This time I only have to trap one monk as I rise to the second tier.
5. The two snares are both embedded in thick ice. I cut a descending series of two to the western alcove, where I grab the snare and slip through an exit hole. I always make sure to create a space at least two blocks wide before I take a snare so that I can still blast my way out.
6. Though it's tempting to use it, I hold onto the snare and trap the red monk in the roof of an empty alcove. On the tier above, I clear away the lip of the ledge in preparation for my next confrontation.
7. Taking inspiration from Wyatt Earp, I leap out toward my enemies and create two adjacent turf traps. To pull off the stunt, I have to measure it so that I still have room to stand. But since I'm standing in the blast area, I run quickly before the turf grows back and climb the ladder to the next level, where I set up a snare.
8. One of the monks dies in the ice compressor and reincarnates near the northeastern corner. Meanwhile, I hear the other monk snap up in the snare. I trap him in a turf pit and walk through turf tar to the roof of the final gold enclosure, where a golden skull lies. A single blast earns me admission. After I place the skull in the rucksack, the gray exit door gongs overhead. I blast an exit hole and sink back to the second tier.

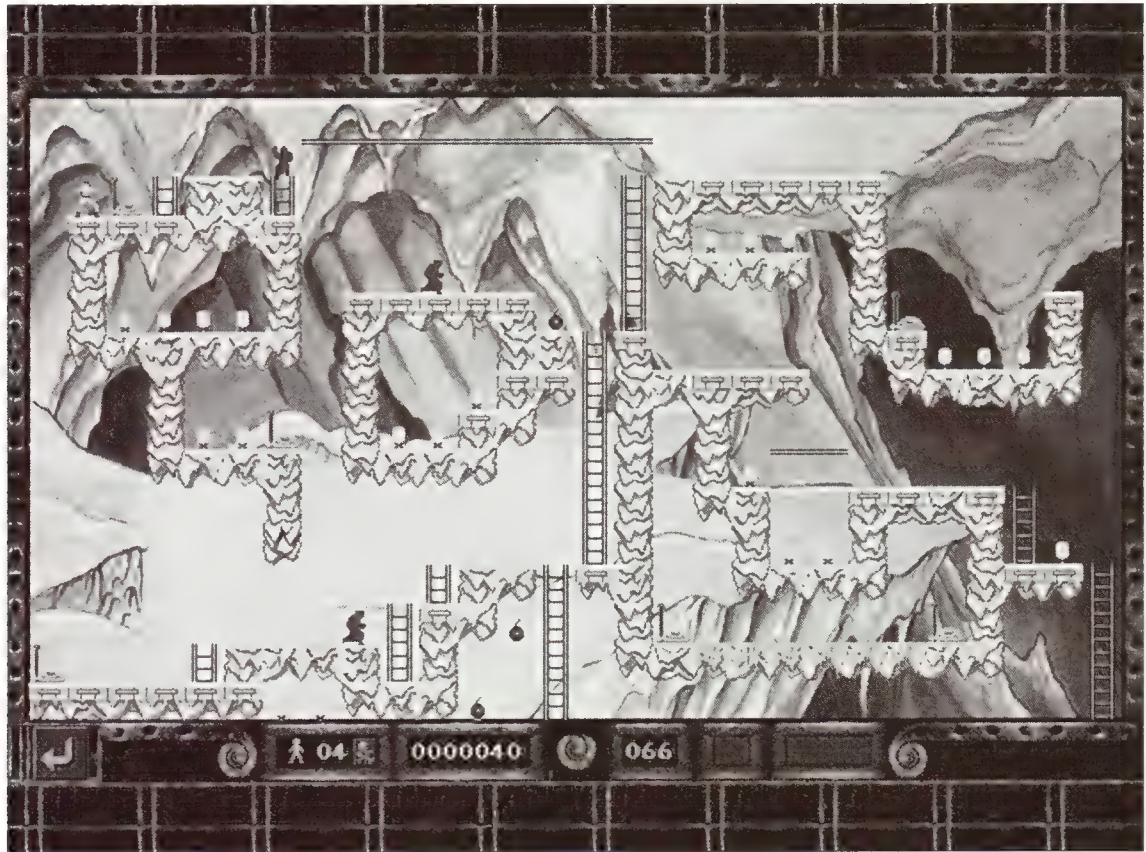
**LEVEL 65**

9. It turns out I don't need the last snare after all. A turf pit suffices. I trap the monk on the second tier, then ascend to the tier above and dive into the cosmic lava lamp.

LEVEL 65

With bedrock on the bottom of the cavern and most of the ledges, the snares offer my only hope of success. But once I get the hang of it, so do the monks.

1. I stand next to a small cliff with three ledges on the other side; the third juts out slightly. It all has the effect of a giant capital "E". I climb over the top of the cliff and drop through trap-door turf to the middle ledge of the "E". There, I grip the snare and drop down to the ledge below. A monk hurtles downward from a suspension ladder,



LEVEL 66

so I hurry to set the trap and grab the two golden skulls. As I drop through the gap to the cavern floor, I hear the whip of the snare.

2. One down, one to go. A mad monk snare sits nearby so I grab it and run east along the cavern floor, toward the eastern long ladder. Before the monk scales down the ladder, I pilfer six golden skulls and plant a snare. I lure the monk west; he flips up and starts spinning like a barber's pole. With him out of the way, cleaning out the rest of the gold on the northeastern tier is like housekeeping. Diagonally opposite, the gray exit door materializes as I sprint for the southwestern corner.

LEVEL 66

Where the previous cavern was a decisive trounce, this Winter's Dungeon makes up for it in terms of challenge and complexity. The tadpole-shaped enclosures house enough horrors to fill a Boris Karloff movie.

1. I grab the snare in the northwest corner and hurtle down to the cavern floor. A second snare sits in the corner, but I can only carry one at a time. Two mad monks barrel toward me, so I don't have enough time to install the snare. I climb up to the ledge and cut a turf trench for them. I then bend the pole in place and step back from it.
2. I almost don't make it out of this one. Even though I slightly misjudge the distance, I manage to set the snare before the mad monk pounds me into mincemeat. With two hanging like upside-down scarecrows, I run east and plant a small bomb in the crook of a "J"-hook. The blast grants me the price of admission to two gold coins nestled under the enclosure where I first trapped the monks. Climbing out of the demolition, I scale to the roof beam and traverse west to the top of a tadpole enclosure.
3. On the roof of the enclosure, I cut a descending series of two and land inside. Somehow, it brings back memories of the Moss Caverns—nice view, as well . . . I come back to the present. I steal a flower patch of four gold coins and fire an exit hole to the "L"-shaped ledge, where I find two more coins and a snare. Floating down to the cavern floor, I race unhindered to the corner of the central chamber, where I light a cherry bomb—my new alternate for small bombs—and sink back for safety.
4. I blast out of the chamber, making off with three gold coins. I ascend the central system of ladders to a "C"-shaped cavern near the roof. Using the long ladder as my axis, I carve into the cavern and remove the three gold tokens stored there. Leaping over the edge, I descend to a jungle beam that hangs over the enclosure where the last red monk patrols. I pluck a coin off a ledge to the west and then fall over the second of two suspended coins to make sure I'm as far from the guard as possible.
5. The laser blaster is unnecessary; I fall through the trap-door ceiling and immediately set to work on the trap. I have plenty of time. The monk catches his lead foot in the loop and upends. I smile smugly and blast out of the chamber.
6. Cleaning up the rest of the gold is going to be like taking candy from a baby. I loop once around to get the second suspended coin, then climb up to the roof tier and descend into the "L"-shaped ledge to

retrieve three coins there. Several more rest in the southeastern corner, and when I snag the last one, the gray exit door appears like an epiphany in the northeastern corner. Mesmerized, I rise upward along the eastern long ladder.

Yellow Alert

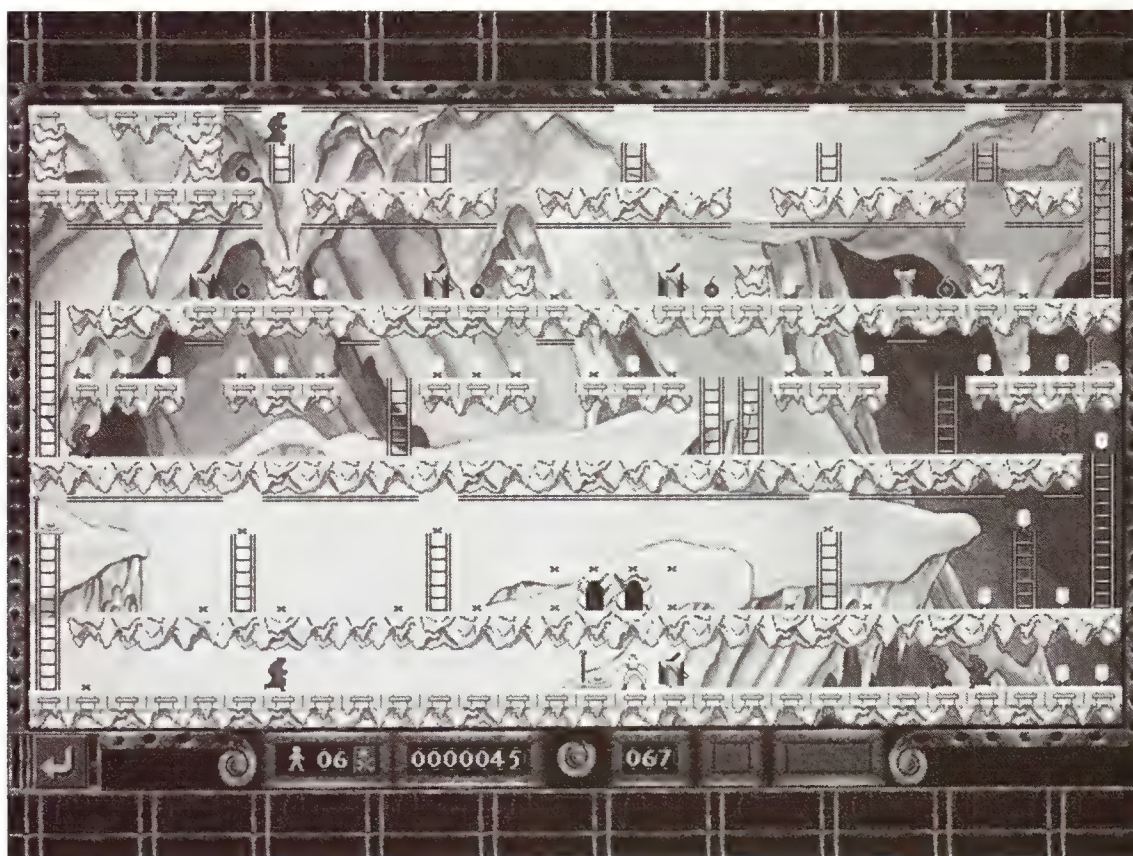
CAUTION
CAUTION
CAUTION

This may sound like an obvious point to make, but if a hapless monk falls into a snare, and he happens to be carrying gold, the gold doesn't automatically become visible. It may disappear behind him. Gold coins in particular can be hard to detect. That's why I always frisk him for any loose change just by walking past.

LEVEL 67

My Viking ancestors would have salivated at the sight of so many gold coins. Four tiers rise above the cavern floor; most of the gold coins are concentrated on the bottom half. Retaining walls are lined up like dominoes on an upper tier, and I find plenty of cherry bombs (small bombs) to blast through them. But with only three snares against six monks, I have to find a way to trap them. That's when the retaining walls give me an idea. But I have to be very careful of trapping monks in the ice, for they reincarnate inside the ice cage in the northwest corner, where the gray exit door eventually materializes. With a limited supply of small bombs, I find that I can't deal with more than one jailed monk at a time.

1. I feel like Jean-Claude Van Damme in one of his action pics: two monks approach from the east, one from the west. A slime bucket stands between me and the odd couple, and a snare lies between me and the lone wolf. I hurl the slime east, grab the mad monk snare, and then step two paces west and set the snare. When lone wolf upends, I run to the western painter's ladder. A mad monk snare lies on the top rung. I use it on the first story to trap a fourth monk who just joined us from upstairs.
2. I step west and watch number four fall into my trap. I feel his pockets but can't find any gold. Then I begin my sweep of the second story by running to a painter's ladder and traversing to a point just east of the hideouts. Dropping down, I loop back and resume my

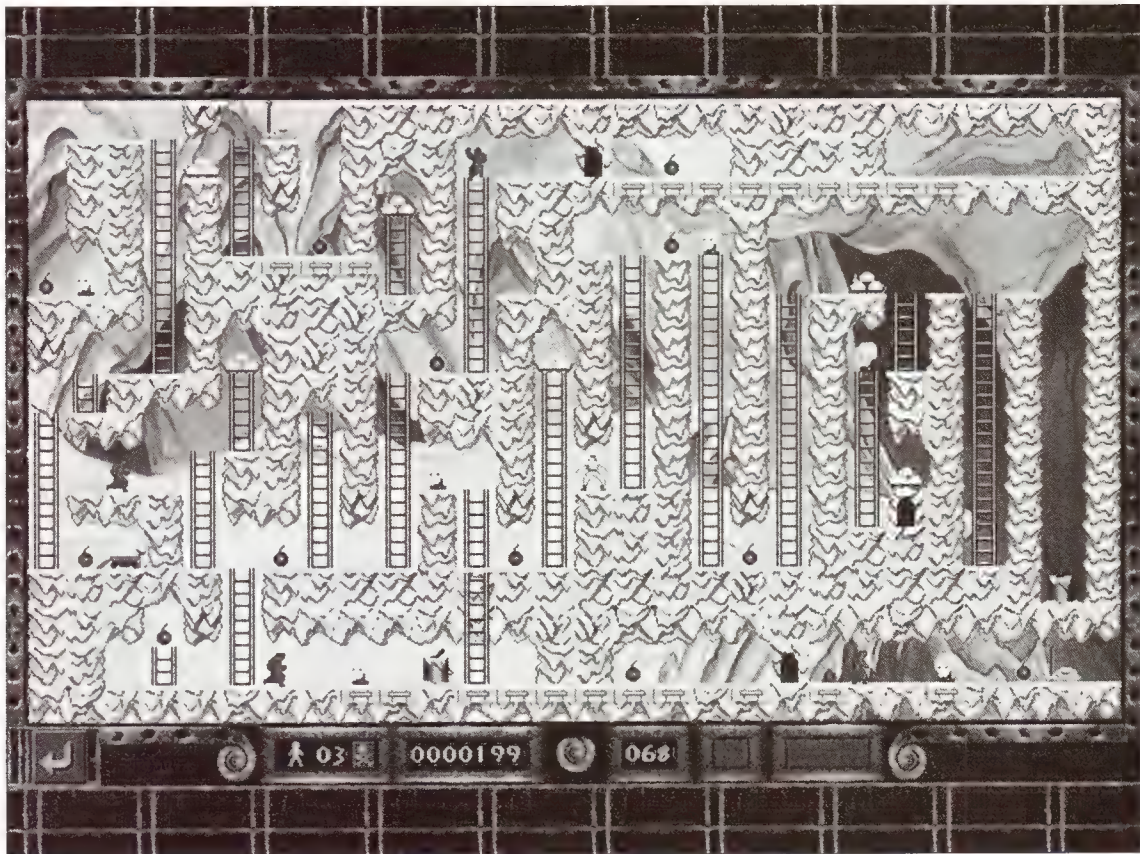


LEVEL 67

work when trouble develops. Two are behind me and one more in front. Using evasive tactics, I climb over the head of the forward monk and finish my sweep of the level. Unfortunately, I can't get to the two coins in the southeast corner safely so I put that off for a return run later. On the second story, a mad monk falls into a turf trap, and I force him to cough up a coin. On the ledge behind him, I detect the third snare.

3. The monk gets compacted in the icy regrowth, then reemerges in the ice cage. I don't want that to happen, but the ice grows back faster here and it's almost unavoidable. After grabbing the monk snare, I run and traverse west across a chopped series of ledges and monkey bars until stopping midway on the tier. I set the snare, then sprint on the surface of the second story toward the west end. One monk upends, leaving two in the vicinity. Thinking of the two gold coins in the southeastern corner, I blast an exit hole and drop below.

-
4. I bolt east on the first story and blast an escape hole just as the two monks start down the painter's ladder. Grabbing the coins, I sprint west on the cavern floor and manage to get up to the first story before they can cut me off. I have to beat them up the western painter's ladder because I have no way to capture them otherwise: the cavern floor consists of bedrock and is therefore impervious to the laser blaster, and I have no small bombs in inventory. I draw them down from the jungle beam, then traverse overhead and head east.
 5. Next, the dominoes on the third story. The small bomb clears away the first retaining wall, and I walk to the next one. For the second blast, I use the edge of the bedrock as my marker: I have to be careful not to walk into the retaining wall as it grows back, nor get too close to the second blast. I avoid both fatal circumstances. The retaining wall grows back soon enough to lock out the two monks as I work east. Then I grab the jungle beam at the far end, and the two monks do the same. Come to papa.
 6. The odd couple traverse east until I release my grip. They do, as well, and suddenly find themselves trapped in an ice pen. I clear the roof tier of remaining coins. The gray exit door appears in the ice cage, of all places, and the newly assigned monk sentry guards it very closely. I set off a small bomb; I feel the heat but survive the blast. This was my last small bomb. The monk from the ice cage dies in the blast, then reincarnates in the ice cage.
 7. We stare at each other through the opening like two karate experts at the Budokan. I have to draw him all the way out; if I climb up the painter's ladder too quickly, he returns inside the ice cage. There isn't much time. The wall will grow back at any minute. Just as he raises his fists to punch me out, I charge up the ladder and hop over his head. Before he can get to me, I dive into the sparkling blue-green biosphere.



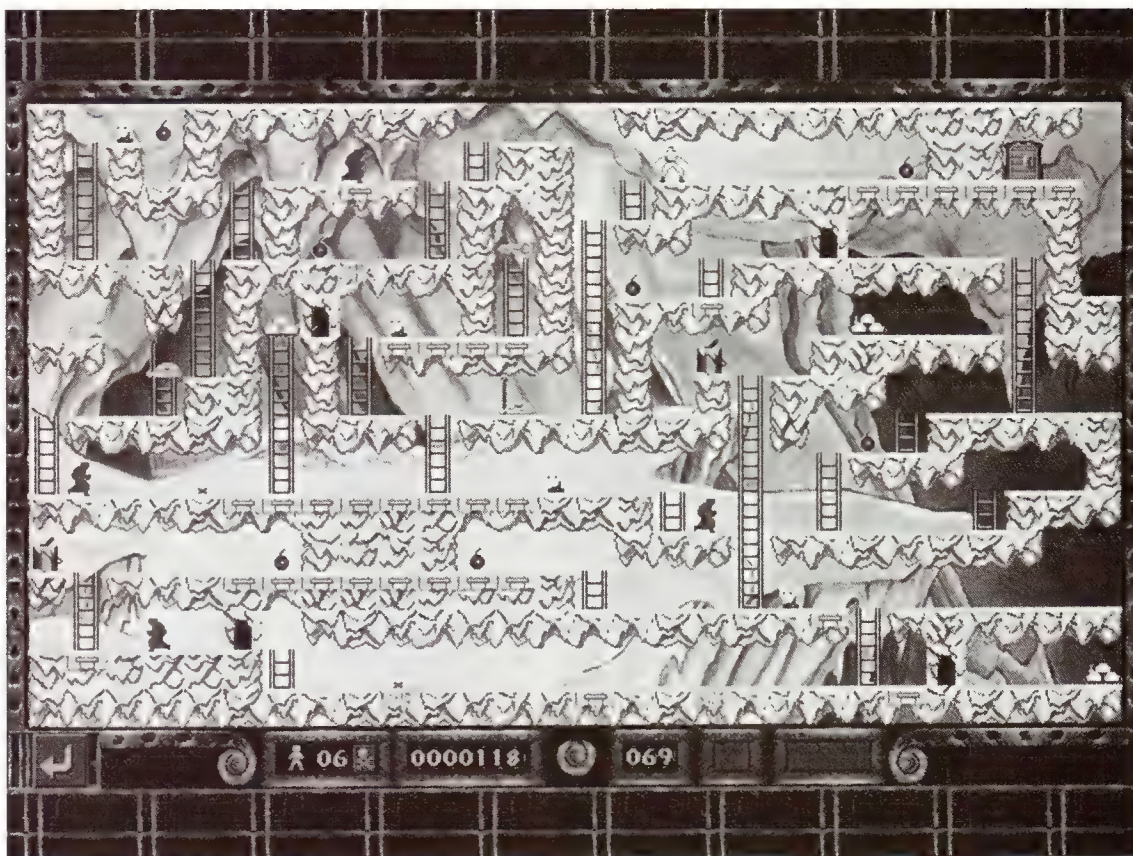
LEVEL 68

LEVEL 68

This complex maze consists mainly of columns. As I wend my way through it, I feel like a dot on a sine curve. Several columns dead-end in ice bowers, the vertical equivalents of small caves. I find two mad monk snares that prove an effective deterrent against two of the four monks. The overabundance of small bombs comes in handy, as well, but in such tight quarters, I have to beware of getting too close to an explosion.

1. Moving east, I pick up two small bombs, golden skulls, and gold bars. I encounter no resistance whatsoever, which is how I like to work. I climb down a long ladder to the bottom of a "U"-shaped well, then plant a small bomb. The blast singes through the ice layer and creates an access hole many times wider than is necessary.

-
2. I kind of go crazy with the small bombs here. A monk tries to corner me, so I dust him. To move west along the cavern floor—my only way forward—I have to blast through the ice barricade. And as the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse ride through the opening, I obliterate them with another bomb. I don't have enough time to set the snare that I find in the southeastern corner, but that time will come.
 3. The monks reincarnate from all directions, and that works to my benefit. One monk, after appearing on the eastern side of the barricade, can't get through in time and ends up trapped for the duration of the tour. I create a turf trap underneath a slime bucket, then set a snare on the adjacent block. I prepare a trenchant welcome for my next two monk guests, and as I hop overhead, the first monk whips upside down in the snare.
 4. Two monks are now out of commission, and a third reincarnates in the southwestern penitentiary, so I only have one pursuer and still another snare to use. But I feel rushed now to get it as I move to the center of the cavern to rob an ice bower of some gold ingots. On my way down, I catch a monk in an ice trap and plunder the northwest quadrant of gold and the last snare, should it come in handy. With no clear entrance into the next ice bower, I detonate a cherry bomb on a bedrock ledge to clear passage.
 5. As soon as I steal the gold ingots inside the bower, the gray exit door materializes in the northeast quadrant behind a thick barricade of ice. With plenty of small bombs in my inventory, I blast through the roof of the bower and then plant a small bomb next to the barricade. Like a battering ram succeeding on the first try, the blast forces entry, and I make a running leap for the cerulean cistern.



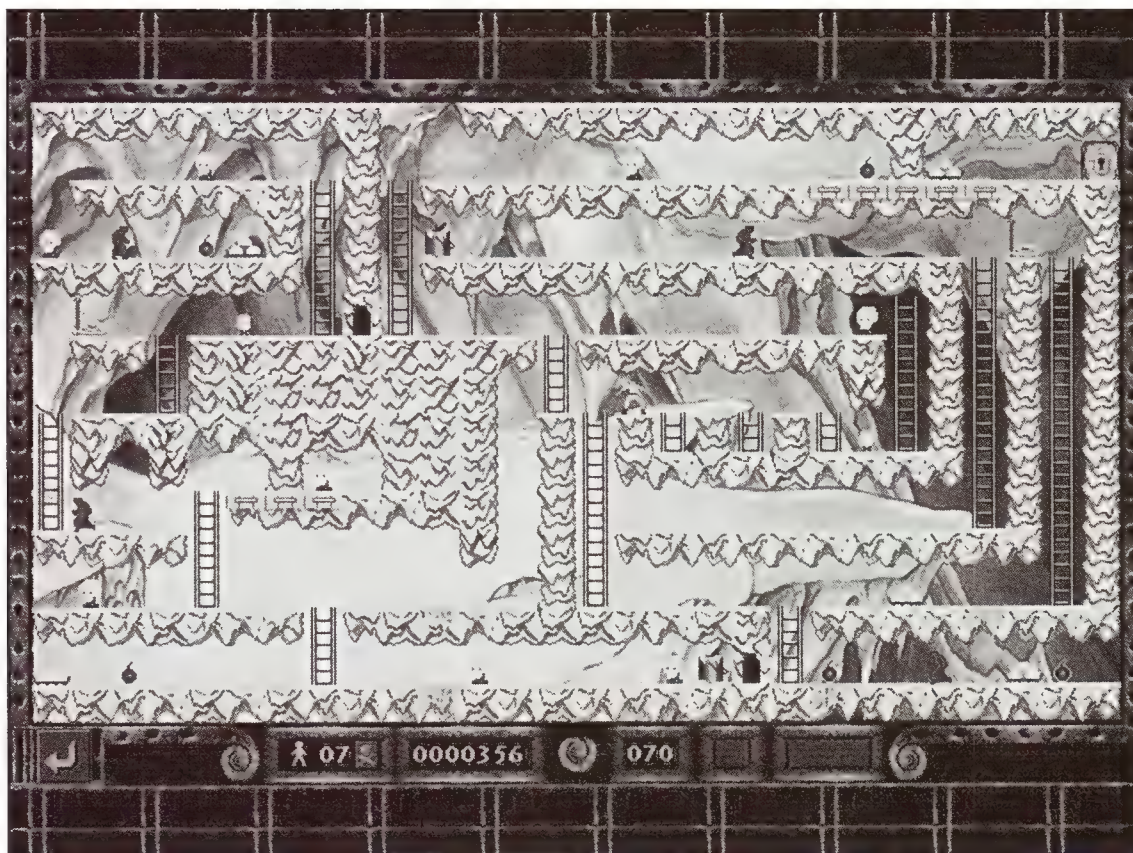
LEVEL 69

LEVEL 69

This lateral maze contains four monks and two snares. As in other dungeons, I work on planting the snares first, then deal with the two remaining monks using small bombs and my ice toaster.

1. From my rooftop perch, I descend the painter's ladder and seize the first snare. I set it on the ice ledge below, near a golden skull. The red monk walks into the trap. I feel his pockets and discover some loose change, then circle up to the next tier, where I find the second snare.
2. The second monk is stationed in a small cave in the northwest quadrant. I scamper up to the roof and quickly set the snare before the monk can throttle me. The pole whips up, and he thrashes at the air. There's nothing in his pockets, so I charge up to the northwest corner and take the golden skull and small bomb from the little nook.

3. I leave that area and run east along an ice tier, then scale up a painter's ladder to retrieve gold ingots and a golden death's-head. The hideout creates the illusion that I stand within an ice bower, but like other hideouts, I walk past it to get the skull. I see no convenient way to break into the real ice bower just down the road, so I set off a small bomb and then jump through the aperture. I take the green key sitting at the top of a painter's ladder, knowing that it belongs to the vault door in another part of the dungeon. Since I have already dispensed with the first two snares, and can only carry one tool at a time, the timing couldn't have been better.
4. I can't, however, carry the key around forever. I'll need to keep my hands free for the slime buckets, of which there are two in this ice cavern. I run up to the rooftop tier and deposit the key in front of the ice barrier that protects the green vault door. I'll come back for it later, after I finish the robbery. The monks can't move it, so it's safe there for the time being. I then blast an exit hole to the tier below.
5. Singeing through layers of ice, I find a stack of gold bars and pack it away. A roving monk finds me and makes an attempt on my life, but I blast a turf pit and hop over his head to get to the golden skull on the ledge below.
6. Near the base of the ladder, I take the golden skull and run down to the cavern floor, where I pick up a stack of gold bars. Running west, I catch a malicious monk in an ice pit and hop overhead to scoop up a gold coin. Scaling a painter's ladder near the west wall, I enter a small cave and set off a small bomb.
7. The blast sets off a chain reaction that toasts a mad monk who comes through the gap thinking he's safe. He materializes on the ledge above. I have to trap his partner on the lip of the ledge, then dash overhead.
8. With all the gold now in my possession, I make my way up to the key and the vault. I have a narrow scrape on a long ladder with a monk on my way up. I probably should hurl some slime at him; instead, I'm forced to trap him in an ice pit as I reach for the key and set off the small bomb. The blast clears through the ice barrier, and I unlock the vault door with the four-leaf clover key.



LEVEL 70

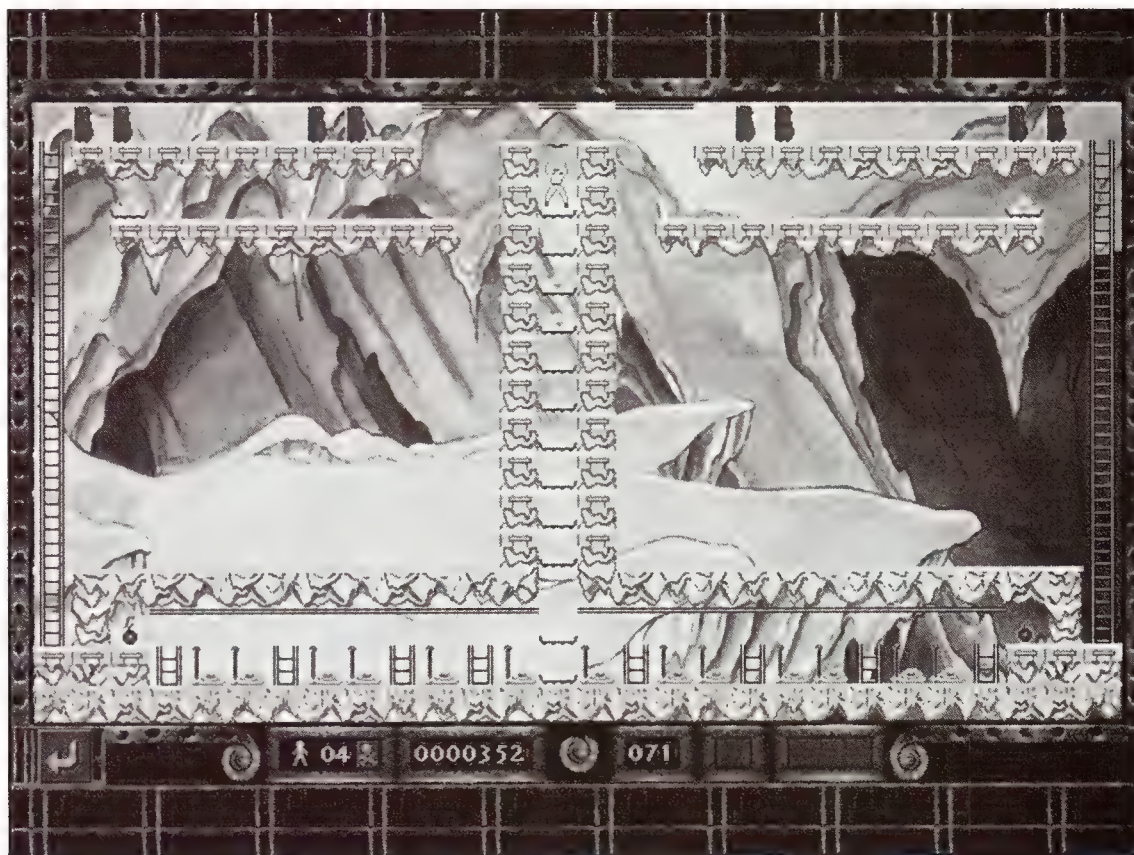
LEVEL 70

This cavern begins as a spiral maze but then, through some nefarious crossbreeding, turns into something slightly different. A large bluff looks as if it just sort of landed on the western side. I have four monks to contend with and two snares to use. With the proliferation of small bombs, slime buckets, and hideouts, I don't think I'll have a tough time working through it—until I discover a few surprises.

1. I break from my starting stance and run east over step ladders and retaining walls. I pick up a gold coin at the foot of the painter's ladder and a golden skull at the top. Running west across the ice ledge, I reach the ladder and scale it halfway to pick up a slime bucket. On the rooftop ledge, I pitch the contents of the slime bucket to slow down a marauding monk while I plant the small bomb at the base of an ice barrier. Normally, I would save this move until the last

moment, since a golden vault door stands on the other side. But I want to get the gold coin first, and then, following the broken rim of the spiral, circle back when I finish the rest of the dungeon.

2. I pack the stack of gold bars and fire an access hole rather than try to run west to meet the monk. I land on top of an ice column, where I find an unused mad monk snare. I install it where I found it and lure a monk toward the trap before descending the long ladder. By the time I hear the monk upend in the snare, I've fired an access hole that empties out on the cavern floor.
3. Before long, I've cleaned out the eastern half of the dungeon, but there's more work on the western side. I run west along the bottom perimeter, picking up gold bars and golden skulls along the way. When a mad monk approaches, I catch him twice in the ice: first on my way to the southwest corner, then on my way back. Swiping gold on my way up, I find my second snare as I enter the northwestern quadrant and install it at the top of a painter's ladder.
4. I rush up to the roof of the small cave where a monk sentry patrols. He guards a golden skull that I want very much. He falls sidelong in a turf trap just as the other monk falls into the snare. From inside, I fire an access hole along the western perimeter and descend to a tier that leads me to the icy bluff. It contains a golden skull and a golden key in a tiny alcove. The small bomb explodes at the base of the bluff as I slip down to avoid the blast radius.
5. After reclaiming the skull, I conclude my gold digging in this dungeon and have loads of time to make it back to the northeastern quadrant, where the gold vault door awaits. Only one monk poses a potential threat, but he's so dazed by what has happened that he doesn't stand a chance of getting to me. The blast from the small bomb clears entry to the golden vault door, and I disappear into the blue light.



LEVEL 71

LEVEL 71

This is the first dungeon where the number of mad monk snares outnumbers the mad monks. Fortunately, I don't have to use all thirteen of them to accomplish my objective. Still, I have eight monks to overcome before grabbing the last two stacks of gold bars. I get off to a good start when I make my entrance, picking up a whole column of gold ingots on the way down to the cavern floor. But the turf tar runs thick in this place, and with monks raining down from all sides, I have to move swiftly.

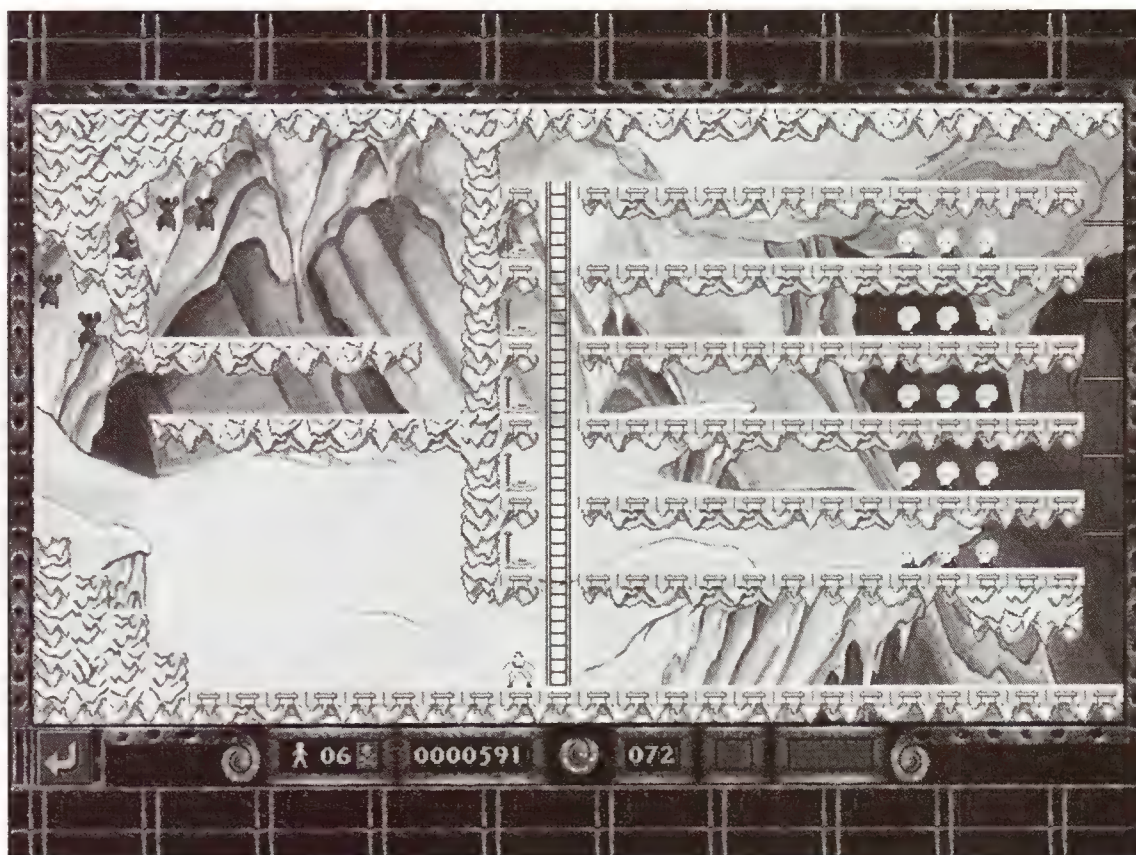
1. I walk east through the sludge, ignoring the snares at hand. At the first step ladder, I climb up to the jungle beam and traverse east to a

space between two step ladders. I then set my first snare exactly where I found it. There's no room to take it anywhere else!

2. I plant a snare adjacent to the first one, then run just beyond the next step ladder and bring back a snare to be placed at the foot of the step ladder. Before long, three monks hang upside down, but I don't have enough time to snag the other five so it looks like I'll have to blast out of this place. A small bomb sits on a ledge to the east, and that looks like a good place to set it off. What I don't realize, however, is that in setting it off, I trigger a chain reaction. From my stance, I dodge the blast radius of the exploding TNT and watch it consume the other monks.
3. I wait for the smoke to clear, then crawl out of the tar pit via the step ladder and ascend the eastern long ladder to retrieve one of two remaining gold stacks. I didn't plan on the monks who reincarnated over the ledges. They march down like lemmings; fortunately, no one takes the gold so it looks like I have a clear opportunity.
4. The monks follow me over the ledge into a free fall. I then climb up the eastern long ladder a second time and traverse west to the other side of this golden bowl. Three monks approach from that side, and one leaves behind a stack of gold bullion. I lead them down to the ledge above the cavern floor, then loop back up again to retrieve the last gold item in the dungeon.
5. As soon as I pack the gold bars into my rucksack, twin gray exit doors materialize, both near the upper ledges. I take a running swan dive into the green shimmering curtain and am transported to the next dungeon.

LEVEL 72

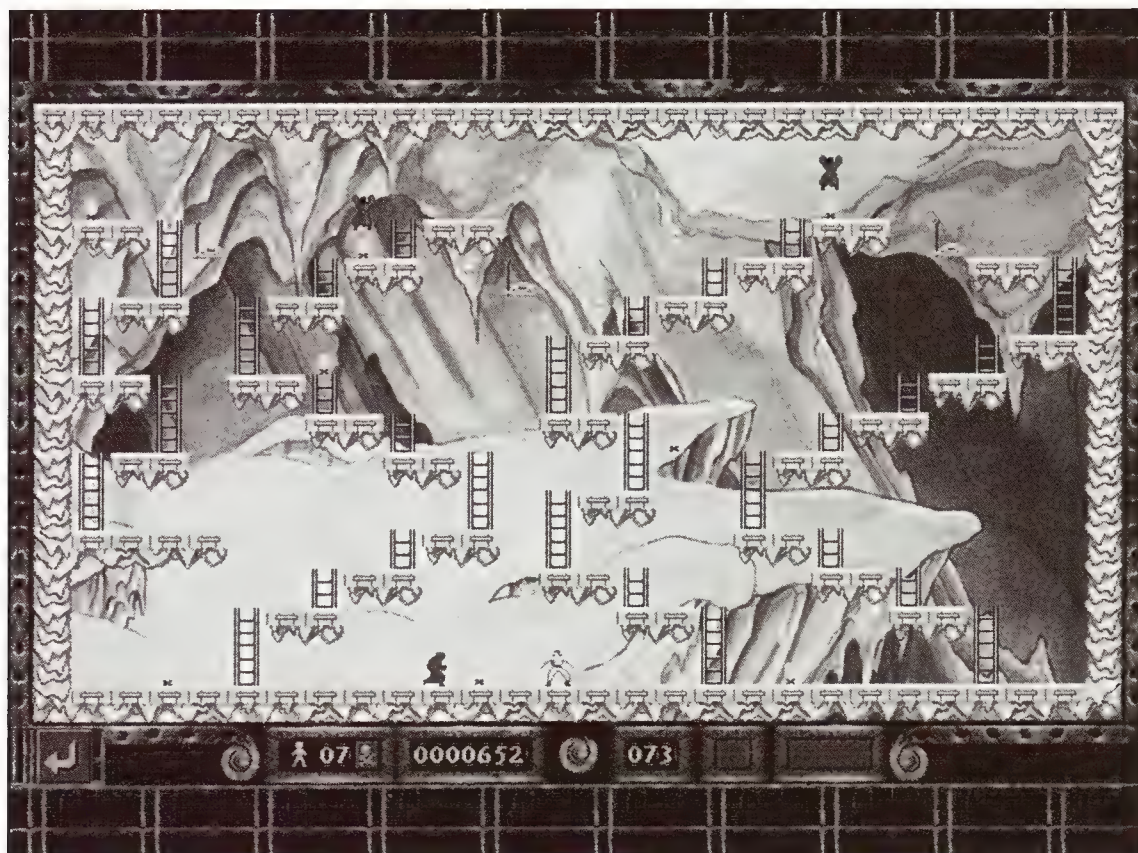
Here I find an even match: five mad monk snares for five mad monks. But I don't need to use all of them. Three turn out to be enough. I just have to figure out where to start setting them. The six ice ridges—one of which is inaccessible—are capped with bedrock, so my laser blaster proves inef-



LEVEL 72

fectual. And since there are no small bombs, I have to rely solely on my trap-laying prowess and expert timing.

1. I climb the central long ladder and try to sort things out. I don't have enough time to set all five traps; even the second one would be cutting it uncomfortably close. So I choose to set snares on the third, fourth, and fifth ridges (counting from the bottom), in that order. I make sure that I don't install them on the little ledges where they're kept, but instead just east of the ladder. Setting them is a little tricky. I step first on the ledge, set the trap, then step back on the ladder. With the third and final one, I step east instead of west to put me in a favorable position to take the golden skulls.
2. I run east to the end of the fifth ridge, grabbing three golden skulls. At the end of the ridge, I leap to grasp hold of a small monkey bar. Monkey bars hang near the end of every ridge along a vertical axis. I merely have to drop down to the next ridge, the fourth one, to grab the golden skulls on the end. Each time I step on a

**LEVEL 73**

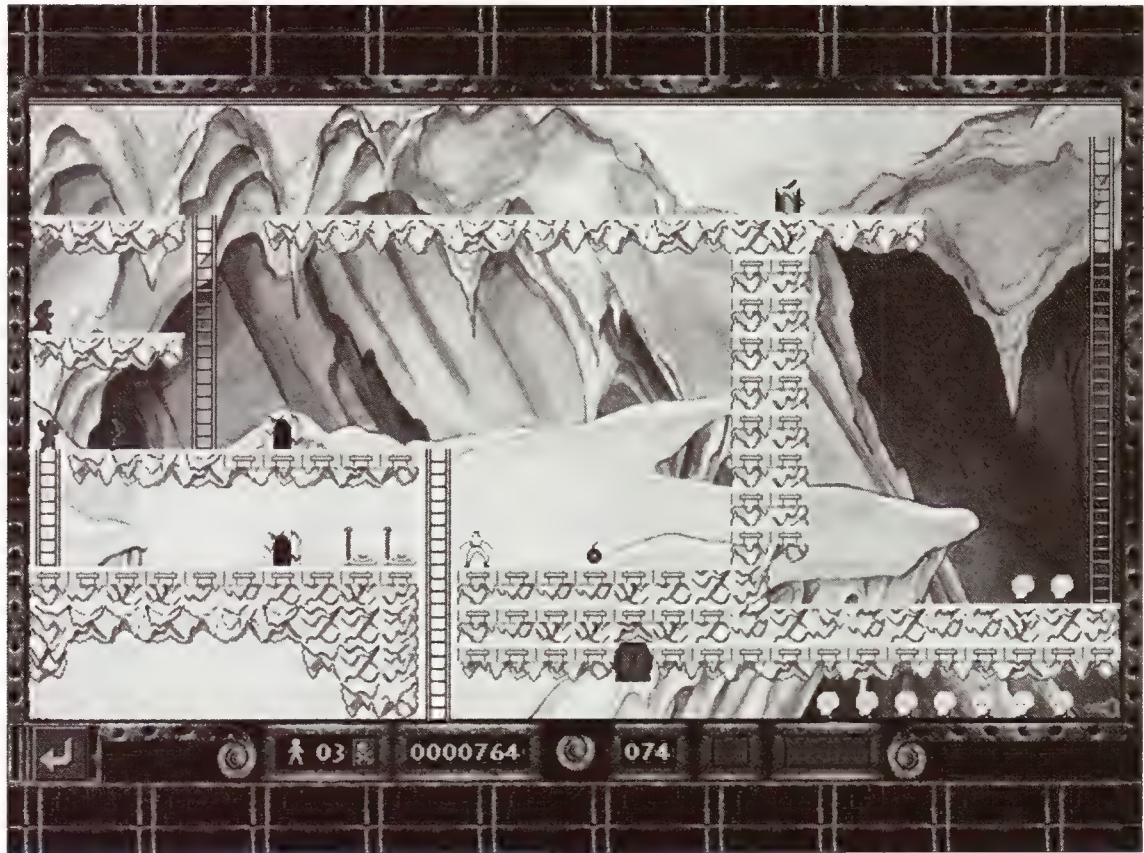
- ridge, a monk will come toward me and step into the snare trap.
3. I follow the same strategy on the third and second ridges, grabbing the golden skulls and then stepping back. I never have to run toward the central long ladder but keep to the eastern side of the ridges as I lunge in like a cat burglar.
 4. When I grab the last golden skull, a gray exit door appears in the southeastern corner. I merely have to drop off the ledge to plunge into the shimmering threshold.

LEVEL 73

Monks are either stupid, or they have no fear of pain—maybe both. In any case, I call this dungeon the land of the crooked staircases. Three mad monk snares dot the cavern, waiting to be applied to the three mad monks. There are three staircases—eastern, central, and western—and a

small switchback on the western border. Through a combination of maneuvering and dirty tricks, I disable these fiends and make off with the gold stash.

1. I run east on the cavern floor, taking a gold coin along the way. I lead the pursuing monk to the southeast corner and then up the eastern staircase.
2. The hapless monk follows me up the staircase. At the head of the stairs, I leap off, grabbing a mad monk snare on the way down. I descend to a clearing far enough away from the monk and set the snare. As he upends, I fly off and land near the bottom of the central staircase.
3. I don't ascend the central staircase for two reasons: one, a mad monk is barreling down toward me, and two, there is no mad monk snare. For that, I must get to the western staircase, but first I want to steal the gold coins on the cavern floor. I sprint east, then west toward the base of the western stairs. I wait for a monk to come toward me, which doesn't take long, and lead him up to the top.
4. I leap off the top step and snatch the snare out of the air. I sail down to the cavern floor, then lead an unwitting monk up the central staircase. Although he sees his cohort spinning upside down on the eastern staircase, he doesn't seem to figure out what I have in store for him. Ensuring that I have enough lead time, I set the snare on a ledge and run up to the top. I don't see him again until he has upturned and I'm already snatching a suspended gold coin out of the air.
5. Two down, one to go. I evade the first monk and make my way over to the western staircase, since that's the only way to reach the western switchback. I have to leap off the westernmost ledge of the staircase in order to make it to the base ledge of the switchback. Meanwhile, the last mad monk tries to keep up with me, but I think his skirt is getting in the way.
6. As it turns out, I don't need to use the last snare after all. I jump down to the base ledge and make my way up the switchback, collecting gold coins as they come within reach. Meanwhile, the last mad monk loses his nerve and tries to disentangle his buddies. The gray exit door materializes on the top ledge. Had it not, I would have taken the snare down to the cavern floor and planted it for the last monk, then checked his pockets. But since it did, I jump into the crystal void.



LEVEL 74

LEVEL 74

A giant construction crane rises from the center of the cavern toward the rooftop. Most but not all of the ledges have a bedrock layer. The top of the crane consists of pure ice, which will prove useful later. There are only two snares; that leaves one monk free to roam where he wants, which means coming after me. But I like the simple architecture of this cavern—and the hidden complexities.

1. I forsake the snares and bolt for the small bomb. Setting it near the base of the crane, the bomb blows an entry into the ledge on the other side, where I find two golden skulls. After slipping them into the sack, I charge up the eastern long ladder and traverse the roof-

top beam west until I dangle over the top of the crane. I land next to the slime bucket.

2. The three monks cluster near the top of the western long ladder. I want to keep them together and a fair distance from where I next descend. I can't come back this way again because I just used up my supply of small bombs, my only means of accessing the eastern long ladder. Jumping over the tip of the crane would put me at too much risk, so I blast an exit hole over the broad ledge. I then run under the first ledge and hurl the contents of the slime bucket west.
3. While they struggle through the industrial spillage, I peel down the stairs and make a mad dash for the seven skulls lying in the east end of the cavern floor. A step ladder appears just as I grab the last skull. I take the red key and sprint back to the step ladder. I can beat a mad monk any day, and so, not surprisingly, I reach the red vault door before he does.

LEVEL 75

Just like a safecracker encounters certain vaults he'll look back on with fondness, I really enjoy cracking this cavern. A network of alcoves and chambers takes up most of the room. My first great challenge involves accessing the snares and gold that are deeply embedded in the snow and ice. All four monks are confined, at least initially, to a long, narrow chamber called the *monk bunker*, which fronts the eastern boundary. My second great challenge requires me to draw one out at a time to thin their ranks and seal the chances of a safe exit.

1. I begin with the snare located closest to me, on the western side of the cavern. I traverse the roof beam to a ledge that provides the best starting point. With my trusty laser blaster, I carve a series of blasts. I make a sort of descending series—firing west, then dropping east, then dropping west, and then west again—to ensure that I have a platform so I won't get trapped.
2. With the snare, I aim to catch my first red monk. I take hold of the snare and then fire east. Dropping down, I fire west and make my

**LEVEL 75**

way down to the cavern floor. I scale the western long ladder and traverse the roof beam to the break-off point, a mark just above where the central long ladder begins. I'll come back to this point at least one more time. Using the ladder as my axis, I begin blasting away at the ice partition.

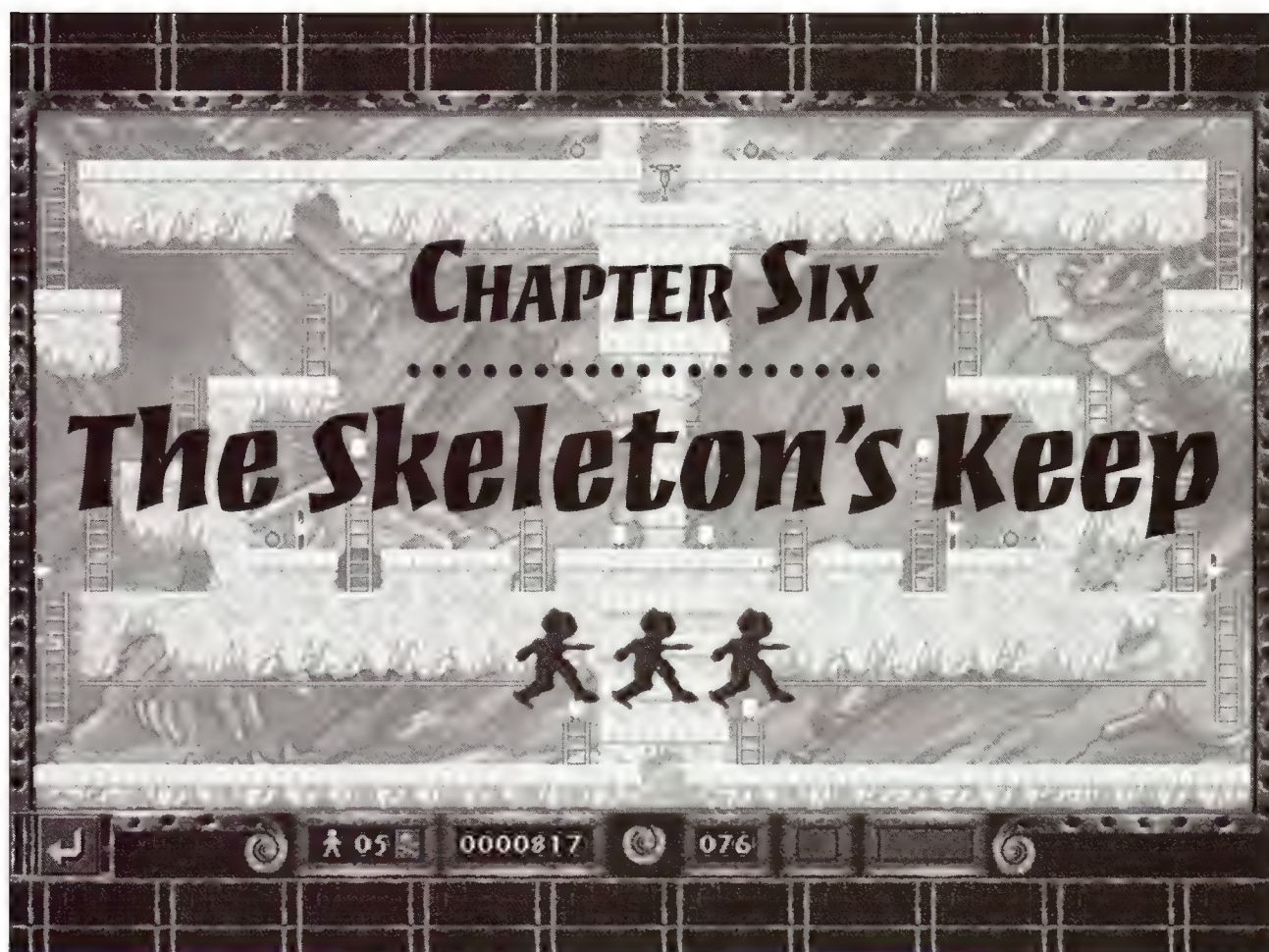
3. When I finish making the entry, I duck into the cavern and lure a mad monk away from the herd. He follows me up the central long ladder. I prepare a snare on the ledge, which the luckless fellow walks right into. I then blast west and begin my descent to retrieve the second snare.
4. Again, I hesitate to call these descending series. Instead, I blast two ice blocks at a time as I work my way down diagonally west to the modest-sized chamber. From there, I make successive blasts in a downward diagonal direction until I land inside the chamber that

- contains the second snare. Again, it's very important that I keep at least two adjacent spaces open so that I don't wind up in a dead end.
5. Firing a succession of blasts east, I work my way to the bottom of the cavern and ascend to the ice partition. Repeating the same steps as last time, I lure a second monk away from the herd and bait him up the ladder to the gallows ledge, where he walks into a second snare. From there, I leap off the ledge and begin working toward getting the red key.
 6. To reiterate a point I've made elsewhere, one can carry only one tool at a time in the Evil Empire. Before I proceed with this tour, I must make sure that the key will be handy when it's time to leave the cavern. But since I still have another monk snare to place—inside the monk bunker—I have to do this in stages. By now, I've become so familiar with the ice network that blasting down to the key, then leaving via the cavern floor requires little contemplation. I return to the roof beam and drop at the break-off point. Down the central long ladder, I clear away the partition and this time deposit the key inside the bunker. I then make a quick retreat, and the partition closes behind me.
 7. I repeat the same routine and cross the roof beam overhead—this time, beyond the break-off point to an eastern ridge high in the northeast quadrant. I fire an entry hold into the lip of the ridge, then drop down onto an ice tuft. I make my way over the eastern painter's ladder and rise to the top ledge, where I find the first and last coin. The chimes ring forth, and I notice two step ladders forming on the three connected ledges below. I blast down to that level and ascend them to the lip.
 8. I blast down to the upper point of entry into the monk bunker. The blasts shave away enough ice that I can drop into a ledge that has the third snare. I could have taken the snare in the northeast corner, but either way I can use only one more snare. The only way out of this bunker is through the red vault door. As I step off the ledge, I grab the snare and land on the tier below. Working quickly, I prepare the trap for the lead monk.

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9. Perhaps the third snare was optional. I'll never know for sure. But after I pick up the red key, I bullet to the red vault door and exit the Winter's Dungeons for the last time.

CONCLUSION

That does it for the ice caverns. On now to the Skeleton's Keep, where I'll learn the virtues, as well as the limitations, of a new tool that can cut through bedrock.



As a child, I loved science fiction films about fantastic prehistoric beasts, like *The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms*, *Godzilla*, and the original *King Kong*. Then my father took me to see the dinosaur bones at the Natural History Museum. Until then, I had never seen real fossils before, but there they were, in all their ancient splendor. Giant apes never fought with dinosaurs, and no monster has ever climbed out of the depths of the ocean to lay waste to a city. Still, I'd never seen an actual dig site until I came upon the Skeleton's Keep. Enormous fossils lie exposed in the bedrock in pristine condition. In real life they must have been terrifying. Still, I feel more like I'm standing inside a giant mausoleum than in the Natural History Museum.

The caverns here possess a type of turf that looks like a cross between thatch and mammal hair. My laser blaster works just as effectively. It comes as a surprise, however, to see the subliminal formations. *LR '94*, for example, means *Lode Runner 1994*. "C++"

refers to the famous computer programming language, until I realize that it's a symbolic reference to the mad monks' religion. In other places, I find number combinations, signatures, and other strange markings. Can this be evidence of a rebel underground? Might the dark overlords of the Evil Empire have an uncertain future? Is there a rebel faction gaining momentum?

Let's get something straight. I'm no paleontologist, and I have no interest in politics. That's right, I'm an apathetic non-scientist who used to teach high-school geometry. I simply came here for one thing: gold. Those were my instructions from the CIA, not that I paid them too much attention. Their walkie-talkie hasn't helped me at all. *Jackhammers*, on the other hand, give me an extraordinary advantage. I don't know where they came from. Perhaps they were left behind after a dinosaur dig, but they still work as good as new. Now I can cut permanent holes through bedrock. Unfortunately, they don't work on turf; I still have to use my laser blaster for that. When digging through formations, I sometimes use small bombs, my laser blaster, and jackhammer in combination.

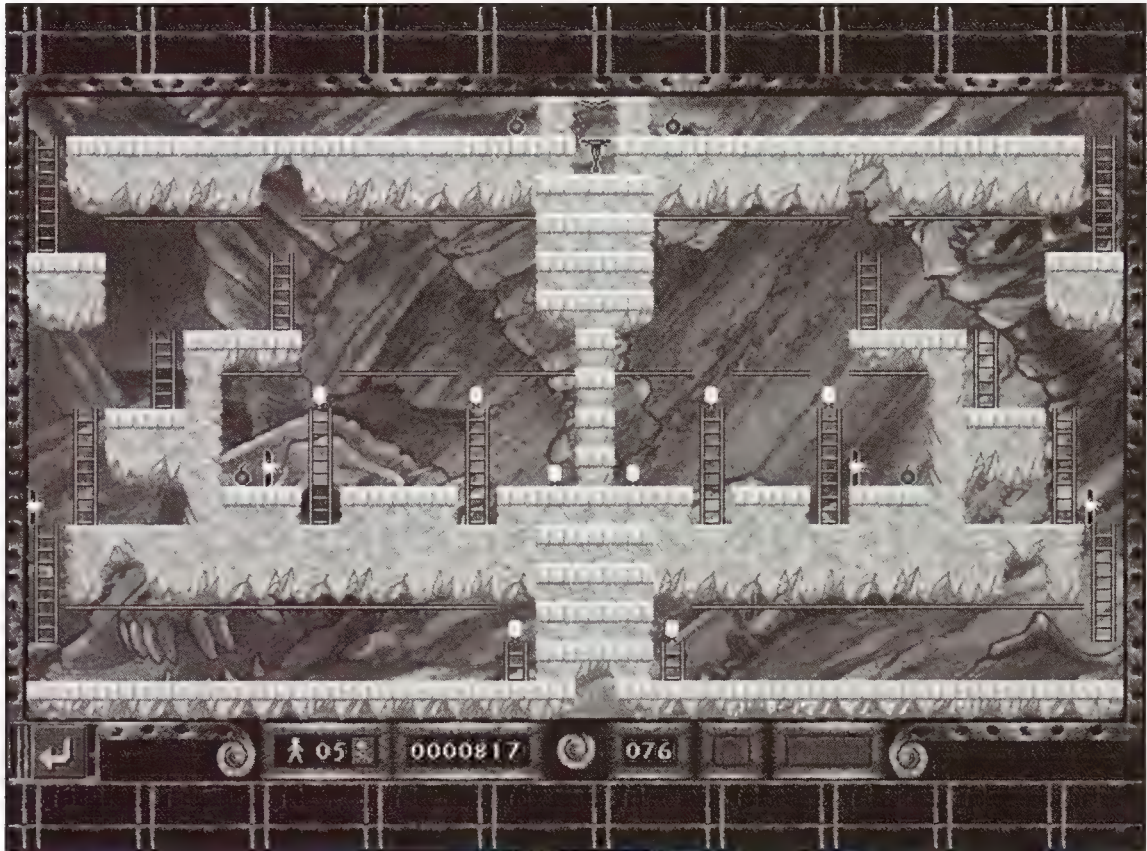
Jackhammers are the exclusive tools of the first six caverns of the Skeleton's Keep. By the seventh, I start to see slime buckets, snares, and some of the other tools that are familiar and useful. But just because a certain cavern possesses four or five different tools doesn't mean I have to use them all. So many tools can be a distraction, sometimes a disadvantage. I find myself, therefore, choosing my tools more selectively.

Red Alert

The monks are particularly vicious in the Skeleton's Keep, but I refine a couple of techniques to combat them. By altering my elevation on a ladder (ladder positioning), I can influence a monk or group of monks to switch directions. If I climb just a few rungs up a long ladder, for example, a monk might suddenly change his mind and turn in the opposite direction. I refer to invisible buttons on the ladders only because it seems as if touching a certain rung or group of rungs makes the monks change directions. I never actually find a button, however.

In several cases, I also find it useful to space turf pits. If a group of monks runs toward me in a close single file, then adjacent pits work fine. Turf tar, on the other hand, has a tendency to separate them a bit,

TIPS TIPS



LEVEL 76

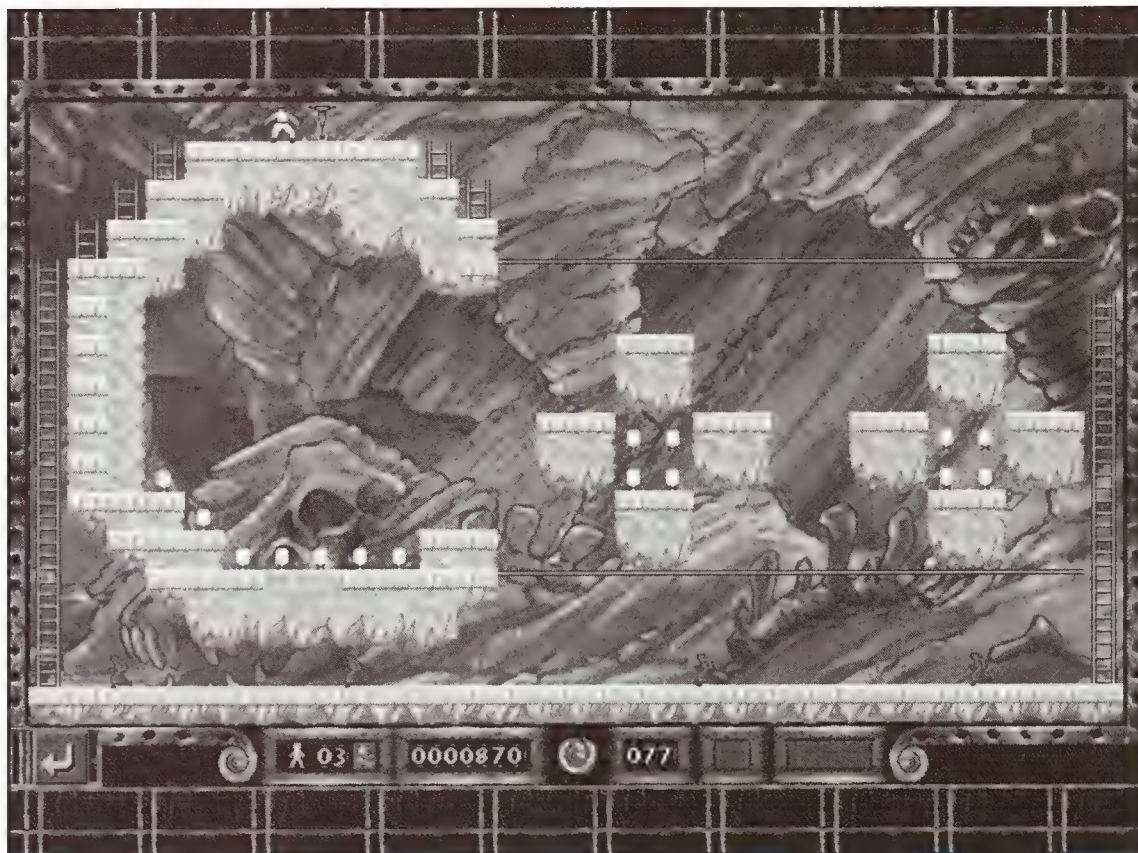
so that if I blast a trench, the first monk might be climbing out just as the other two fall in. To avoid being pressed into a corner, I usually start from far back and work forward, blasting pits and trapping monks separately.

Used separately or in conjunction, ladder positioning and pit spacing provide an effective deterrent.

LEVEL 76

I study this cavern for a while but can't make out any subliminal form. As best as I can tell, a dumbbell stands on one end in the center. Maybe the architect was into pumping iron. Putting on my noise-proof ear plugs, I pump through the spine of the weight-lifting shrine.

1. I land on a jackhammer with no way to go but down. I stop using the jackhammer on a bedrock block just level with both jungle beams. Monk sentries circle like sharks on both sides, and I don't want to become easy prey for them. The one who guards the west chamber circles farther away, so I choose to get off my pedestal on the west side and snatch a gold coin on the way down.
2. Without hesitating, I drill through the bedrock layer adjacent to the column. I create a shaft that empties out on a step ladder. The monk sentry leaps through the shaft and descends overhead. Meanwhile, a monk rover is coming from the southwest corner on the hand-over-hand bar. I release my grip; the rover drops. I loop around and traverse west before the sentry can pound me on the cavern floor.
3. I climb up several painter's ladders and ledges and then leap into the western chamber, where I find a small bomb and a gold coin. I then drop through the shaft to the cavern floor.
4. Earlier, I catch the gleam of a gold coin hanging loosely in the folds of a mad monk's garment. I lure them forward and then detonate a small bomb in their midst. The blast removes the gold coin. After taking it, I climb up to the roof ledge and set off a small bomb exactly where I found it lying against a thatch retaining wall.
5. I drop through the shaft and land on the block again. Putting a little spit in my hands, I chew away at the block and invite the monk sentry from the eastern chamber over to the western one. He happily obliges. I try getting him to fall through the shaft, but he's too smart for that. Instead, I cross the monkey bar into the eastern chamber, leaving him in solitude.
6. I clean out the eastern chamber of gold coins and one small bomb. The last remaining token lies on the cavern floor. Just as I grab it, a gray exit door materializes smack in the center. I could plant a small bomb to ward off the approaching pair, or skip overhead via the parallel beam, but instead I hop on the ledge and smash through the bedrock, narrowly making it to the exit before getting smashed myself.



LEVEL 77

LEVEL 77

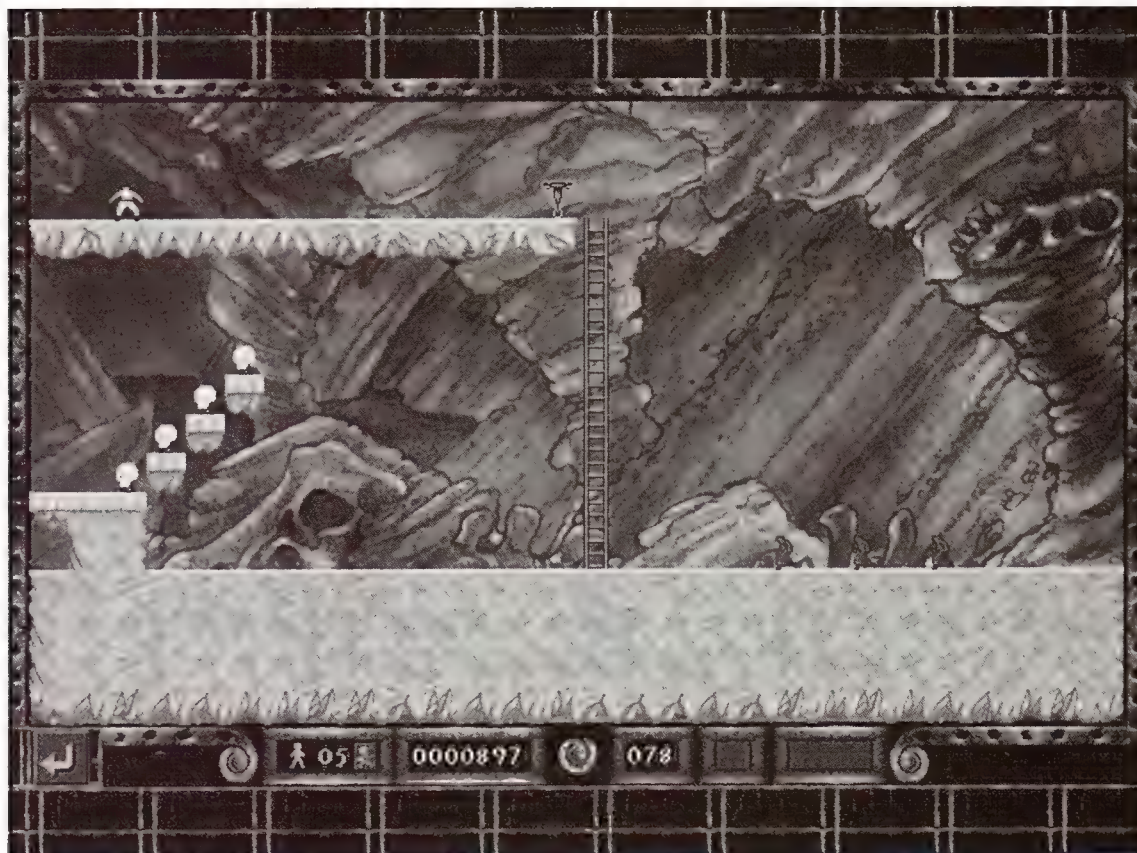
The religion of the mad monks could fill volumes. Briefly, they worship a supremely ruthless being named “C.” The monks often chant “C++” in a repetitive monotone, like a bunch of Sherpas paying homage to a yeti. It is rumored that “C” came into being within the bowels of a 386 computer. All I know is that I have to ransack this shrine to the Evil Overlord before the pagan gets thrown out. I stand up against four mad monks. That, and the concave shape of the letter “C,” makes my task a heinous one.

1. I run over the top curve to the lip of the overhang, then spike through the bedrock layers. I drift down to the ledge below and enter the concavity. I can’t get to the gold coins on the upper ledges.

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They're beyond reach, and there's no way to climb up to them inside the cave. Instead, I cut a descending series of two and exit to the cavern floor.

2. The mad monks follow me single file as I run to the eastern long ladder. When I grip a rung just below the level of the bottom beam, the monks switch directions and head to the western long ladder. I must have touched some kind of hidden button, but I never find it. After crossing west along the top beam, I hammer into the interior of the second "plus" sign.
3. Once inside, I can only pick three gold coins. I traverse the top beam a second time and jackhammer an entrance from the other side. The monks, meanwhile, keep to their side. Since the holes are permanent, I use the same exit hole as before. I return to the upper beam again and traverse west to the first plus.
4. This is basically a repeat of what I did before, only this time I have a little farther to travel along the beams. As before, I can pluck only three gold coins from my first entry, so I have to loop around again and enter from the opposite side to complete the harvest.
5. Me Tarzan. You monk. I lure four of them toward the eastern long ladder. I can wait on the ladder, but I have to be careful not to touch the invisible button. When the stench hits my nostrils, Tarzan charges west via the bottom beam.
6. I beat my slower rivals and drop down ahead of them. I notice that as I drop through the air, they briefly reverse direction and then resume going west. Sure enough, I find an invisible button on the lower rungs of the western long ladder that makes them turn around and run east. When they start gyrating on the upper section of that ladder, I attack the upper curve of the "C." I pick a spot where I can drop over the topmost coin and begin to work on the upper block first.
7. There are four stages to this, and I've already begun the first. With the jackhammer, I remove the outer block first, then sidestep up the ladders to the inner ladder and bash through it.
8. The fourth stage requires a blast from the laser shooter. I leap through the hole and drop down to the topmost coin, then jump down to the second one. The gray exit door materializes on the lower lip of the "C." With the monks safely out of the way, I cut

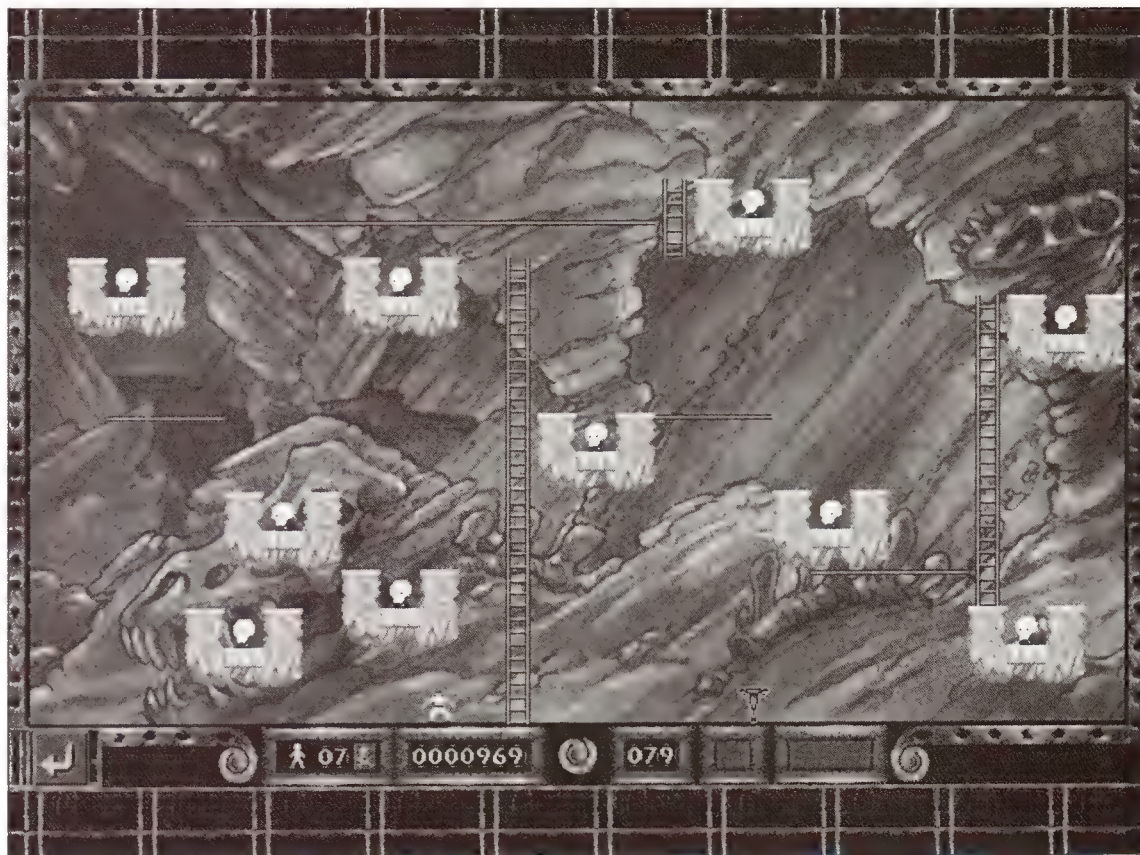
**LEVEL 78**

through the thatch turf, loop overhead via the western long ladder, run along the upper reaches of the “C,” and then drop through the same shaft that I hammered away at the very beginning of this tour. I then fall effortlessly into the aqueous mist.

LEVEL 78

Does it ever get any easier than this? When I first look the cavern over, I think this has to be a prank. But if there is an error to be made, it's in the false supposition that this cavern is more difficult than it really is. In other words, it's a piece of cake. I just have to remember to pick up the jackhammer before flying off in search of gold.

1. Checking my watch, I figure that in the time that it takes me to run to the jackhammer and back, I could have run the 100-yard dash in



LEVEL 79

under 10 seconds. All this exercise is starting to pay off. Hammer in one hand, blaster in the other, I rip a nice access hole and sail down to the first block-ledge.

2. I scoop up the golden skulls as I drop down the steps. The gray exit door materializes inside a bedrock cage. Since I already have the jackhammer, I simply plow right through the roof and drop off into the Neverland.

LEVEL 79

Sigh. No monks to confront. “U”-shaped cradles keep golden skulls in safe-keeping, but not for long. To save time, I try to keep off the cavern floor by drilling my exits over lower cradles.

1. East of my starting stance, I find the jackhammer and take it with me up the central long ladder. I then traverse the roof beam to the out-

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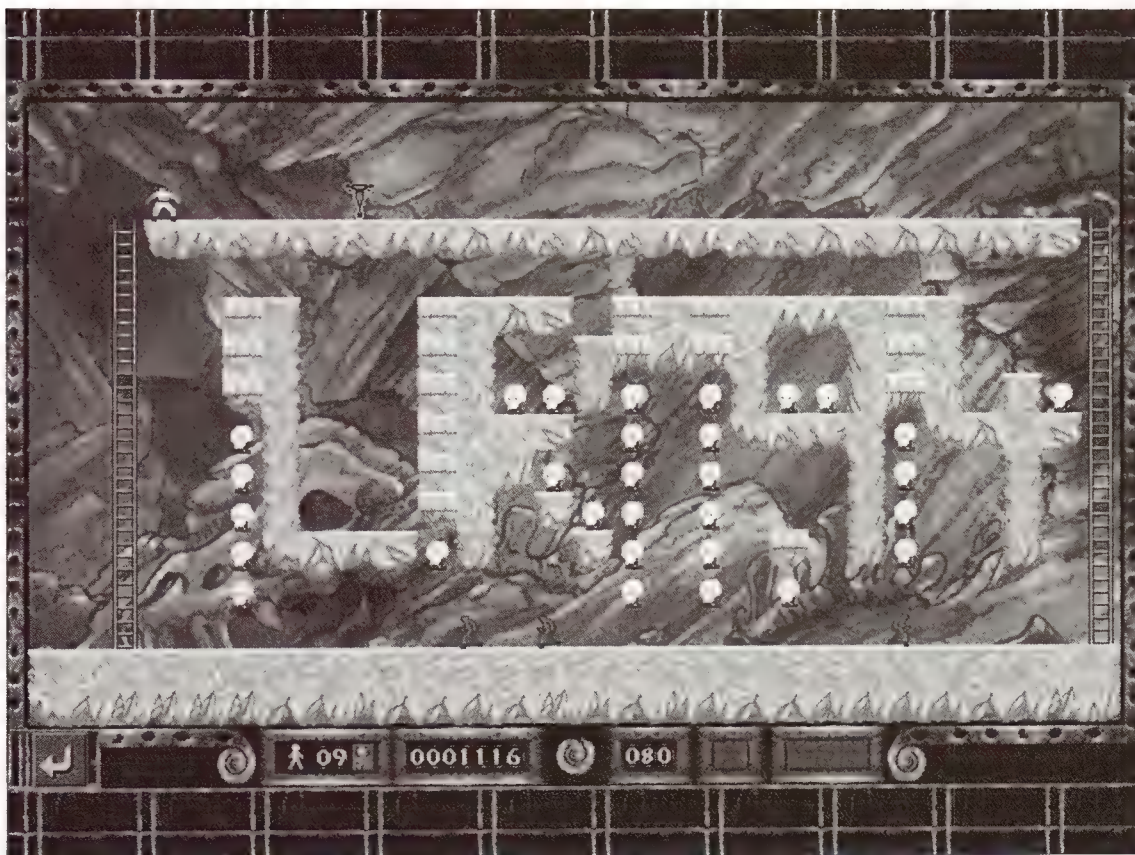
ermost, or westernmost, cup. There, cooing in a manger of thatch, I find a golden skull. To escape, I chip through the bedrock bottom.

2. I land on a monkey bar and hand-walk over to a cluster of three cradles. I drop down to the highest one, then drill down to the lowest. I smash through the bottom and fall to the cavern floor.
3. I scale the long ladder again, then traverse to the near-west cradle. Ripping through the underbelly, I sail directly down to the third cradle in the cluster. From the bottom, I climb up the long ladder to the midpoint and snatch the golden skull that lies therein.
4. To get to the highest cradle, I traverse east along the roof beam to a painter's ladder that leads me to its doorstep. When I exit, I drop down to a monkey beam, which then deposits me inside an eastern cradle.
5. I split open the bottom and clasp the monkey bar beneath. A cradle comes into view, but I skip it in favor of the one above it. This way I can drop down to it without having to circle back up to the northeastern cradle. After I grab the last golden skull, the gray exit door materializes in the southeastern corner, and I plunge headlong into the frothy blue.

LEVEL 80

A subliminal message is emblazoned on this cavern: *LR '94*. I am Jake Peril. I am the Lode Runner. And this is 1994. Further evidence that a rebel faction seeks to overthrow the Evil Overlord. Perhaps there were "wanted" posters circulating around. Mere speculation. As I carve and sculpt, I focus on not trapping the mad monks for too long in the thatch turf because they can reincarnate inside the letters, making it virtually impossible to finish my sweep of the keep.

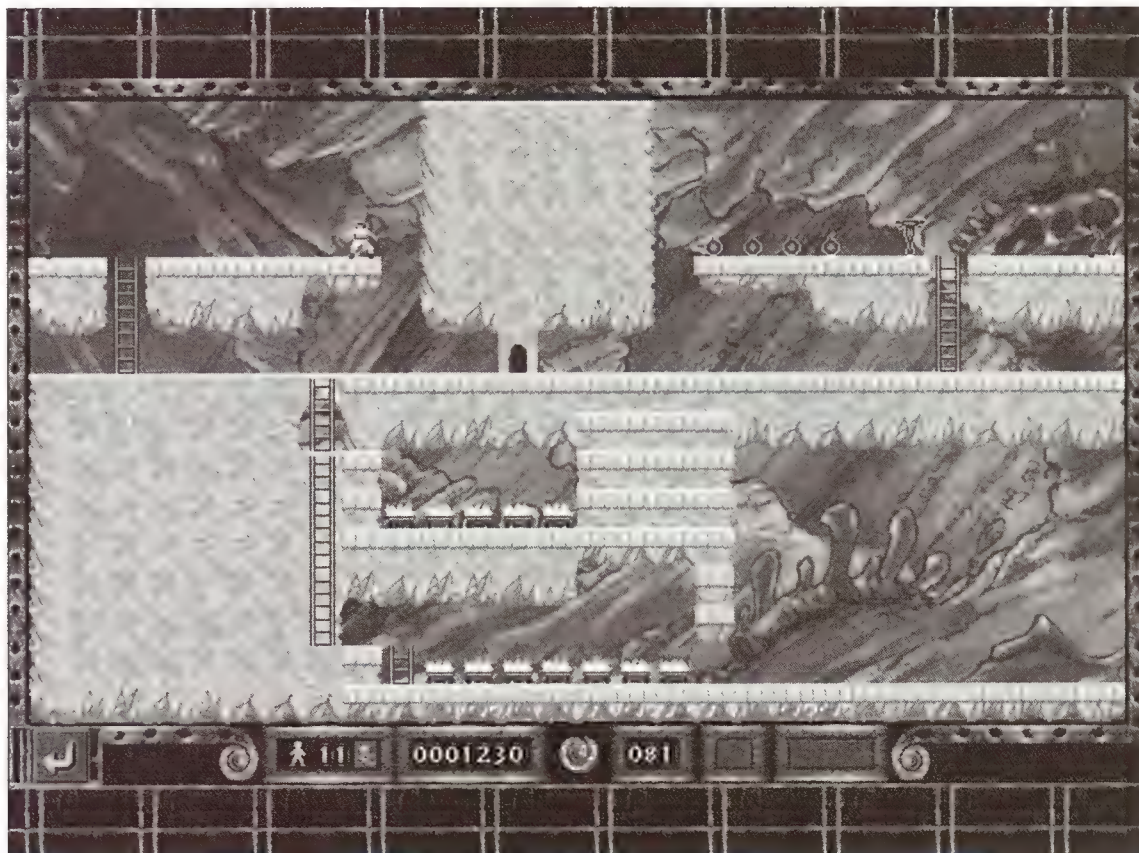
1. I sprint up to the turf roof, take the jackhammer, and blast an entry hole over the "R." I drop down over the spine of the "R" and bash through the bedrock column, at the bottom of which hangs a suspended golden skull. The reason: the "L" forms part of an urn that can trap a monk should he rematerialize there. By battering down



LEVEL 80

the spine of the “R,” I free an opening. Running east, I trap a mad monk in the turf but tarry by the edge just long enough to draw him out of the pit before he gets crushed.

2. The fallen monk coughs up a golden skull, which I grab as I hop overhead. I scale the eastern long ladder and burst a hole over the “9.” The eye of the “9” looks like too perfect of a monk hideout; I blast into it to retrieve the gold so that, if a monk ever reincarnates inside it, I won’t have to worry about fetching the gold in such tight quarters.
3. To make my exit, I blast a hole over a tiny ledge that covers a death’s-head. I spike through the ledge and drop to the cavern floor. I then run up the eastern long ladder and split the “9” and the “4” in half. At the bottom of the column stand four golden skulls, which I’ll net on the drop.
4. Each time I travel to the ledge, I ascend the eastern long ladder. The monks, meanwhile, keep to themselves, although I do have to trap

**LEVEL 81**

them now and then in the turf, but it's safe to do so. To separate the apostrophe ('), I start on the east side first, stealing six skulls, then on the west side. Gradually, I work my way west until I drop down above the "R" again. I fire a round at the top of the "R" to get inside the eye.

5. I hop down the diagonal of the "R" to the cavern floor. I then run up the western long ladder to the top ridge, where I burst through the turf to get to the "L." This is the last segment of the "skulpture." I stand back and admire my creation, as one might admire Mount Rushmore. The great gray exit door appears in the southwest corner, and I plunge toward its refreshing spray of light.

LEVEL 81

Who is that in the middle? Phyllis Diller or Tina Turner? Whoever modeled for this architect obviously had a big hairdo. With a mad monk

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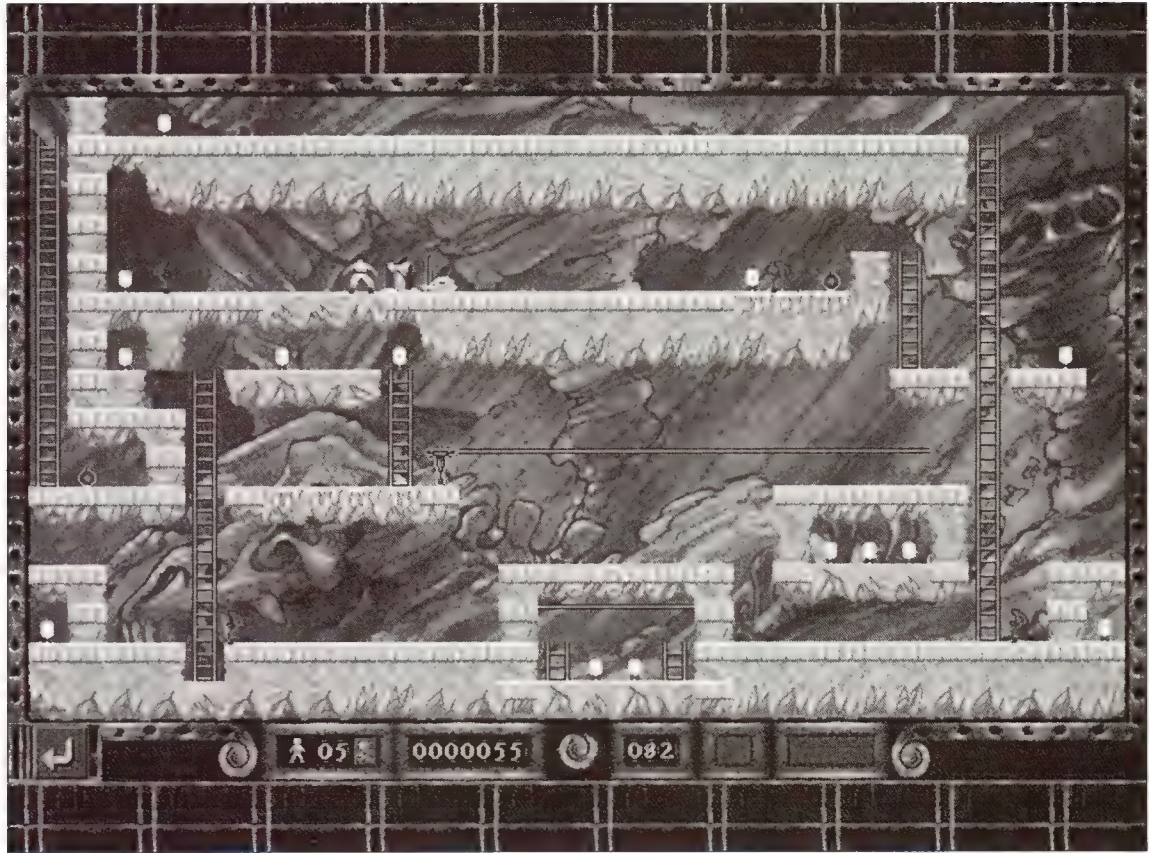
in each corner and not much time to take the loot, I feel a little pressured to run this lode, but the jackhammer turns out to be essential to the solution.

1. Brave man that I am, I retreat into a hideout, where I wait until both monks clump on the western painter's ladder. I then run east across the tier, ascend the eastern painter's ladder, and collect the jackhammer and four small bombs on the top ridge.
2. Five treasure chests fill a chamber in the heart of the cavern. I drill down a column of bedrock that borders the eastern rim of the chamber, take the gold, and then plow an exit along the same column. The two monks rush down to attack on the cavern floor, but I grab the last treasure chest just before they can reach me.
3. I have four small bombs, and I don't use a single one of them. I suppose I could to get the monks off my back, but the rest of the gold lies on the cavern floor, so by dashing east I seize the remainder and take a running leap into the redemptive ectoplasm.

LEVEL 82

The next cavern makes a quantum leap in degree of difficulty. I've started in difficult positions before, but this is ridiculous. If I don't think fast, I'll get snuffed by the mad monk coming fast from the west or the one coming from the east. I figure out a way to escape both through quick reflexes, coordination, and resourceful thinking. Ladder positioning especially comes in handy.

1. I have to do three things in fast succession. First, I blast a turf pit without moving a step. This slows down the western monk while I hurl slime eastward to slow down the eastern monk. Then, I prepare the snare for the western monk, who's just crawling out of the turf pit, and wait for him to step into it.
2. Through the turf pit, I can see trap-door turf. If I were a little quicker, I'd create the turf pit farther west so that I could land on solid thatch. Instead, I wait for what seems like ages—the eastern monk

**LEVEL 82**

has just emerged from the slime I poured for him—for the turf to grow back. It does, but not a moment too soon. I clear an exit hole just next to the bedrock and drop down to the ledge. I leave both monks behind, but now I have a new adversary to face.

3. What happens next will seem more difficult than it actually is. I drop down to the ledge below and stand on the bedrock. The monk sentry climbs down from his perch and steps into the orange ooze. Meanwhile, a monk rover approaches from the west across a hand-over-hand bar. My goal: to draw the rover into the western half of the cavern. When his body odor becomes unbearable, I slide down a few notches on the painter's ladder and find the magic button. The sentry switches direction, and the rover drops from the beam. I can't climb back up again until the sentry leaves the turf tar and drops down to the cavern floor. By then, the rover has already started up my ladder. I struggle through the turf tar to get the jack-hammer and the gold coin at the top of the ladder.

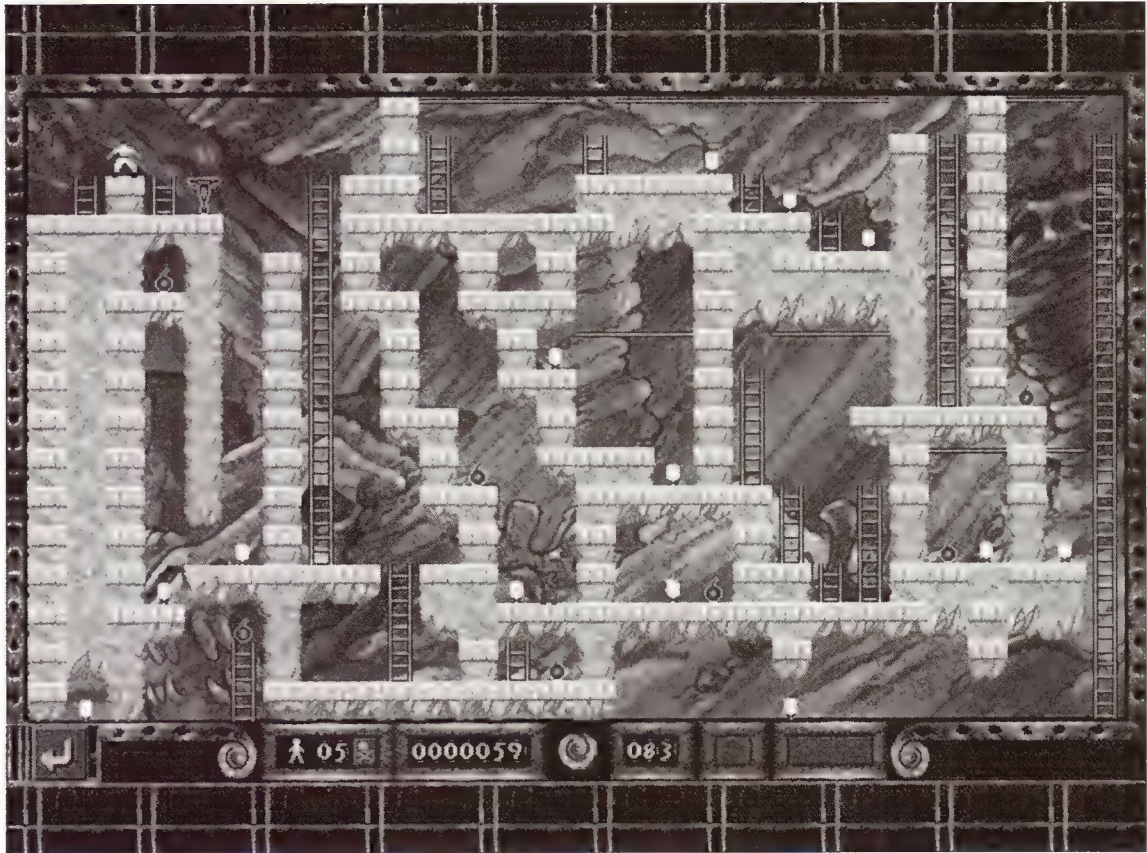
4. There is only one jungle beam in this cavern that stretches across the middle of the cavern and ties both halves together. I cross it until I drop down on the first of two rocky enclosures. They remind me of tombs. I hammer through the bedrock and dislodge the gold coins inside. Then I climb up the eastern long ladder to the roof of the second enclosure and repeat the same procedure. Unlike the other enclosure, however, the eastern flank of the second enclosure consists of bedrock and turf. I have to remove the turf with my laser blaster to steal the coins.
5. The mad monks keep on the western side as I raid the east. I batter through the roof of a small enclosure in the southeast corner, then scale the eastern long ladder to a ledge that supports a painter's ladder. From the top of the painter's ladder, I blast away at the turf tuft and leap into the orange slime to retrieve a small bomb and a gold coin. I then backtrack to the painter's ladder before the tuft grows back. I don't leave just yet. Instead, I remain level with the tuft. The magic button on the ladder rung draws the mad monk to my side until he bumps into the turf—exactly where I want him.

Red Alert

CAUTION CAUTION

It's my luck that the gold coin remains on the tier where it is. The eastern monk could just as easily pocket it and bring it with him to the other side. Had he done so, I would ignore the gold coin for now and pick it up on the other side. I can use the same turf to trap him as in the beginning of my tour, so I have no worries there.

6. I return to the eastern long ladder and scale it to the rooftop tier. I find a small bomb in the northwest corner and detonate it. I then hammer through the bedrock column that flanks the western long ladder, taking a gold coin at two turns. The monks become very agitated. The eastern one starts west toward me but has to cross through two patches of turf tar. Soon, he'll jump through the shaft I just forged. The two monks in the southwest quadrant spin around anxiously.
7. As I drill down through the enclosure in the southwest corner, I know I'll have to dispense with the monks somehow. The last gold coin triggers the gray exit door in the northeast corner. I fry two

**LEVEL 83**

monks at the base of the long ladder with a small bomb, having placed it seconds before at the very foot of it. I then climb the long ladder and cross east, through the turf tar to the jungle beam, until I square off with a recently reincarnated mad monk on the beam.

8. I release from the bar and drop to the roof of the enclosure. The monk doesn't release his grip until he comes over the roof as well, so I jump down to the cavern floor and run east to the eastern long ladder. From there, it's an easy ride up the ladder to the ledge and newly formed eastern painter's ladder, where I fall through the blue-green threshold.

LEVEL 83

I emerge from the hatch and find myself in a complex maze that looks like an oil refinery. Actually, the structure on the west side looks like my beaky ex-mother-in-law, but that's another story. This one only has two

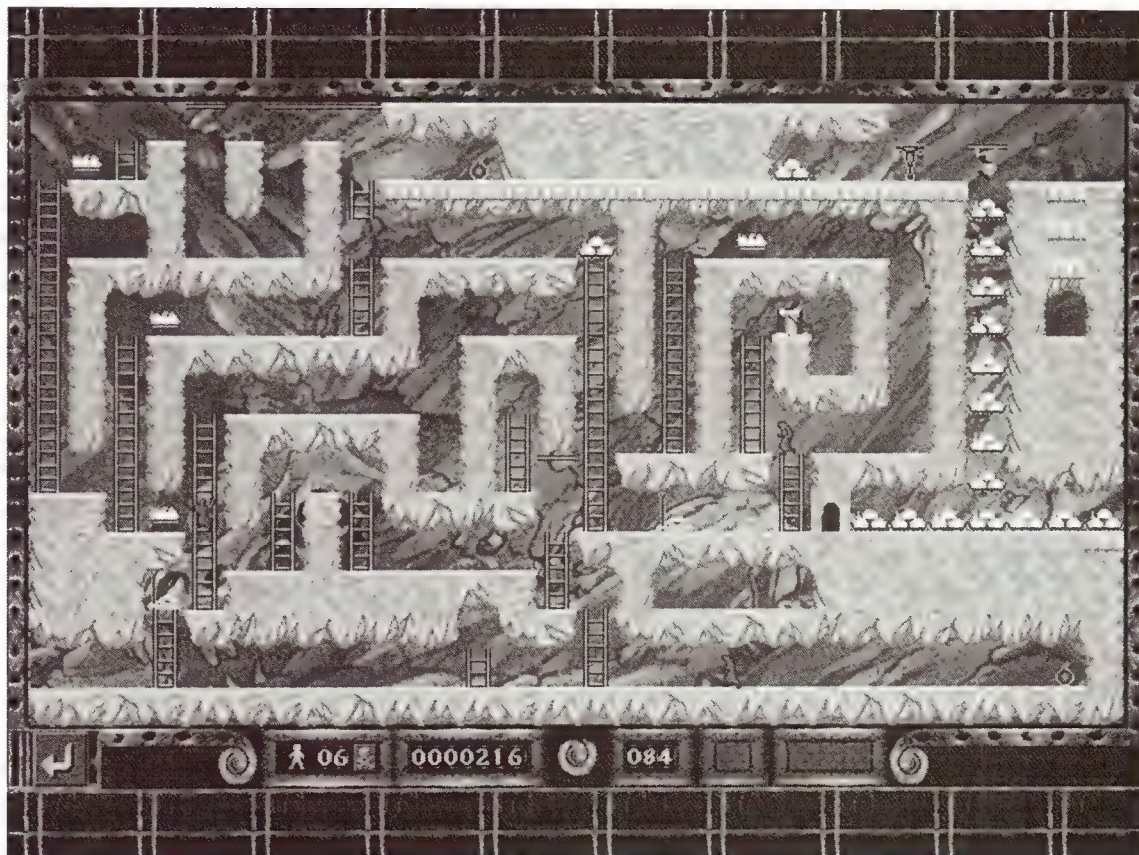
mad monks posted, but they're vicious and mean so I have to be even more vicious and mean—like my beaky ex-mother-in-law. My opening gambit requires a well-timed, well-placed small bomb.

1. I grab the jackhammer and spike through the foot of the step ladder to an alcove below. I hook the small bomb on my belt and drop down to the next ledge to retrieve a gold coin. The monk sentry sails down through the shaft. I have just enough time to plant the small bomb in front of a turf wall that conceals a southwestern gold coin. I wait for the monk to reach a point just below middle elevation before I light the fuse. I wait at the top of a painter's ladder, where I find another small bomb. The blast incinerates the monk and disembowels the turf long enough for me to steal the coin. But this monk is persistent. He reincarnates in the same spot and drops through the shaft. Acting quickly, I plant the second small bomb on a rung of the ladder and gain entry next door.
2. I make it safely inside the next chamber; the monk floats down to the cavern floor and then oscillates on the painter's ladder. I climb up a painter's ladder to a long ladder that forms a right triangle with a diagonal bedrock ridge. I level the bedrock column so that I can take the gold coin without getting trapped on the other side. I then set to work on the hypotenuse of the triangle. For those of you who either flunked geometry or have become a little rusty, that's the side of the triangle that stands opposite the right angle. I hammer through the first three blocks.
3. I leap off the diving ledge toward where the second monk stands, collecting a small bomb on the way down. On the ledge where I find the explosive, I chip through two layers of bedrock until I become level with the ledge. Ironically, I want to release the mad monk from his pen; he holds a gold coin that I intend to take from him. With a step ladder to my side, I first batter through the outer block, then loop up and over the hypotenuse until I stand on the outer block. Wiping the sweat off my brow—a mixture of hard work and nervousness—I flatten the outer block and then immediately dash to the step ladder.
4. The monk pursues me up the long ladder, leaving behind the gold coin on the ledge. I sidestep off the ladder, pick up the gold coin, and then blast a turf pit in the newly exposed thatch. The monk

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takes so long to get down that by the time he falls in, the thatch crushes him to death. He reincarnates through the fixed monk portal in the northwest corner. Next, I need to forge entry to the cavern floor, a process that consists of several stages. I blast the adjacent thatch block, then spike through the bedrock. I then light the fuse of a cherry bomb inside the small interior and seek refuge in the turf pit. The blast wedges a nice opening, and I pass down to the cavern floor.

5. Without breaking my stride, I swing down my hand to pick up the gold coin and climb up the eastern long ladder to the short parallel beam in the northeast corner. Unable to go farther west, I sail down to a bedrock column and drill to a point just below the monkey bars on both sides. The height is important. Later, I'll loop back this way and have to stand on this ledge to make it to the second bar. In front of the turf barrier, I detonate a small bomb and run inside the enclosure, where I find a gold coin and a second small bomb. The second blast bursts through the wall of an interior chamber, but it also scoops out a pit. I loop over and traverse the monkey bars—and the bedrock column—until I make it past the pit, then drop down and jump through the turf wall before it regenerates.
6. A small enclosure smack dab in the center of the cavern keeps a small bomb and a gold coin. I need to level the bedrock blocks so that I can leave the chamber. First, I attack the outer block. Then I ascend the painter's ladders until I stand above a stack of three blocks. I demolish them, the result being a level tier bridging both chambers. After I pocket the loose change and hook the small bomb on my belt, I climb up to the face of the high turf barrier and detonate a small bomb. I wait below beyond the radius of the blast, then loop up a second time to leap through the threshold.
7. Now, with the monks out of my way, I sense I'm near the end of my tour. I climb up a painter's ladder that rises between thatch and bedrock and retrieve three gold coins on the roof ledges, using the two step ladders to get to the highest ledge. I run west until I stand over a "Y"-shaped column. I drill through the stem of the "Y," then skip down a series of ledges to get the last two coins. A gray exit door materializes inside the former "Y." I have one small bomb remaining in my inventory, so I use it to burst a hole through the high turf barrier and retrace my steps to where the blue-green portal stands, through which I enter into my next cavern.



LEVEL 84

LEVEL 84

This lateral maze has two spiral sections that remind me of the bear claws at the corner donut shop. By now, I've grown so accustomed to grabbing the jackhammer at the start of a raid that it's almost become second nature. Actually, I don't need it until the very end, since the maze consists almost entirely of thatch turf.

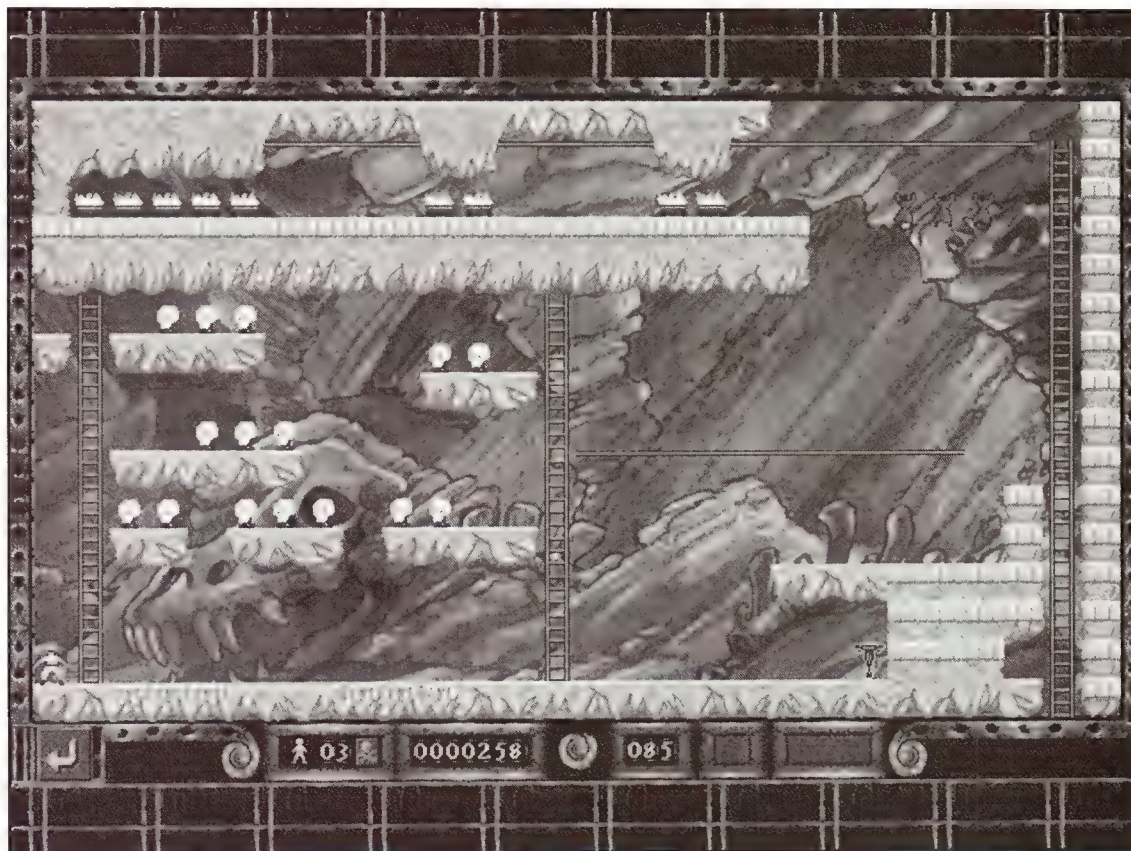
1. My arms grow a little weary holding on to the monkey bar, so I relieve them by running west to the stack of gold bars in the rear of a small cave. Ignoring the jackhammer, I run back to the shaft and collect my jackpot on the way down the shaft. A nimble monk from the central zone homes in on me, but I prepare a turf trap for him. While he lies in the pit, I sweep the area of gold bars until the place begins to swarm with monk terriers. I retreat into the hideout until the three monks convene in the southwest quadrant.

2. I prepare the mad monk snare and lure my first victim. The monk lets out an inaudible shriek as he upends. I then race up to the northwest quadrant. A mad malingerer patrols nearby, but I trap him in a turf pit.
3. I slip down a painter's ladder and stash a treasure chest at the end of the turf ledge. Meanwhile, my wily foe catches wind of my activities and tries to ambush me. I blast an escape hole in the turf, which also serves as a turf pit. A second monk approaches on the ledge below; I ensnare him in a snug turf trap.
4. I want to grab the treasure chest in the northwest corner, but it's impossible with three monk fiends in such tight quarters. I head down to the southwest corner instead, picking up a mad monk snare on the way down. I prepare the snare on the cavern floor, lure the lead monk into it, then create a turf trench for the other two monks. Once they fall in, I confirm that they aren't hiding any extra gold when I dash overhead.
5. With two mad monks hanging from the gallows and the other two bumbling behind, I make my way up to the northwest corner and rob the last gold item, a lonely treasure chest. This engenders the gray exit door on the eastern flank, deeply embedded under a column of bedrock and sandwiched between thick layers of thatch. I cross the monkey bars east toward a thickly packed hay barrier. The small bomb at the base touches off a chain reaction. I keep back until the last blast, then run through the temporary opening to the jackhammer. I cross the short parallel beam to the top of the column and bash my way down to the cool and refreshing blue light.

LEVEL 85

The tenth cavern in the Skeleton's Keep-dom presents familiar challenges in a more sinister form. It turns out to require a finely tuned combination of ladder positioning and pit spacing. Both help me clear the golden skulls from the ledges and the treasure chests from the rooftop ridge.

1. From my pole position, I sprint across two patches of turf tar to the central long ladder. I ascend it to the jungle beam, then traverse east to an overhang, beneath which stands the jackhammer. A mad monk

**LEVEL 85**

- has followed me across the beam, but I dispatch him in a turf pit blasted into the overhang.
2. I jump over the overhang and retrieve the jackhammer. The monk crawls out of the pit, but by the time he jumps down to the cavern floor, I've already looped around to the mid-level tier. Thoroughly befuddled, he rejoins his comrades on the western perimeter while I hammer through bedrock to the base of the eastern long ladder. I climb up to the ladder and traverse the roof beam to the rooftop ridge, where I stash all the treasure chests. I return to the lip of the ridge and plunge downward to the mid-elevation beam.
 3. Plundering the eastern ledges of golden skulls requires no great expertise; the monks keep to the western long ladder. When I finish, I leap down to the cavern floor and swagger over to the overhang. I wait and plan. I want to get the golden skulls on the heavily guarded western ledges, but I have to get past the monks. The

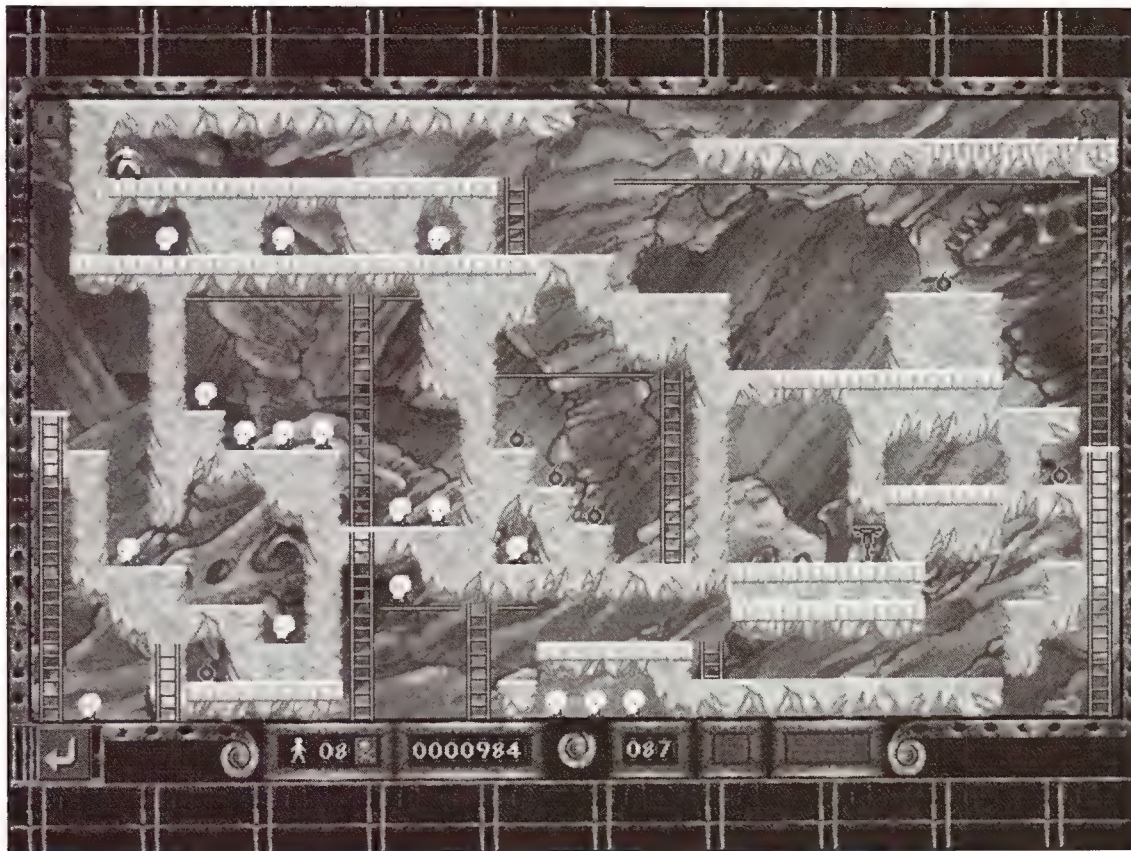
spaced slime patches break up the ranks; instead of coming toward me single file, they come in waves. Starting in the far corner deep under the overhang, I trap my first monk, hop overhead, then space a second turf pit two turf-blocks west. The second monk falls in, and I space a third pit for the caboose.

4. I hop over the last monk and trudge through the turf mire to the western long ladder. The monks follows suit, but I find the magic button on the long ladder about mid-elevation, just above the lowest ledges. I wait there until the three monks cluster at the same height on the central long ladder.
5. The monks can't get to me now. The turf-tarpits keep them beyond reach. I vacuum the western ledges of golden skulls. The last one prompts the gray-exit door, and I scamper up the ladder and lunge into the shimmering green transporter.

LEVEL 86

This cavern gives me the eerie feeling that I'm being glared at by an evil, four-eyed monster. Four equivalent rectangles occupy the upper half, while a vicious grin occupies the lower. The two monks display unusual cunning. I have to be especially careful not to trap them for too long in the turf, for they can easily reincarnate as a pupil in one of the eyes, complicating my task greatly. That doesn't mean that I never use turf traps. I simply avoid trapping a mentally deficient monk twice in the same hole, or allowing a second monk to fall into a trap just vacated by the first one.

1. Two monks charge toward me on the turf tier. I blast two holes, one of which I jump through into the smile chamber. Both fall into the turf trench. If these step ladders are teeth, this fellow needs to see a dentist. I find two golden skulls on the bottom, then climb up to the eastern side of the smile. Cutting a descending series of two, I drop down to the cavern floor.
2. In making my rounds, I often trap the monks in the turf tier. This time, one dies in the regrowth and reincarnates inside the smile. It wasn't intentional, but I'm relieved that I've already taken the golden skulls from it. That means I have only one to confront.

**LEVEL 87**

Rising up to the roof tier, I fire a blast into a turf patch near the eastern end and hammer down the bedrock divider. Unhampered, I clear the eyes of golden deposits and drill down to the turf tier.

3. I trap the monk in the turf a second time and circle up to the rooftop tier. Blasting the patch of turf, I leap into the pit and chew through the bedrock divider. I empty the merged chambers of remaining gold and spike an exit hole. The gray exit door materializes in the northwest corner. I trap the monk one last time and scamper up the ladder to the aqueous threshold.

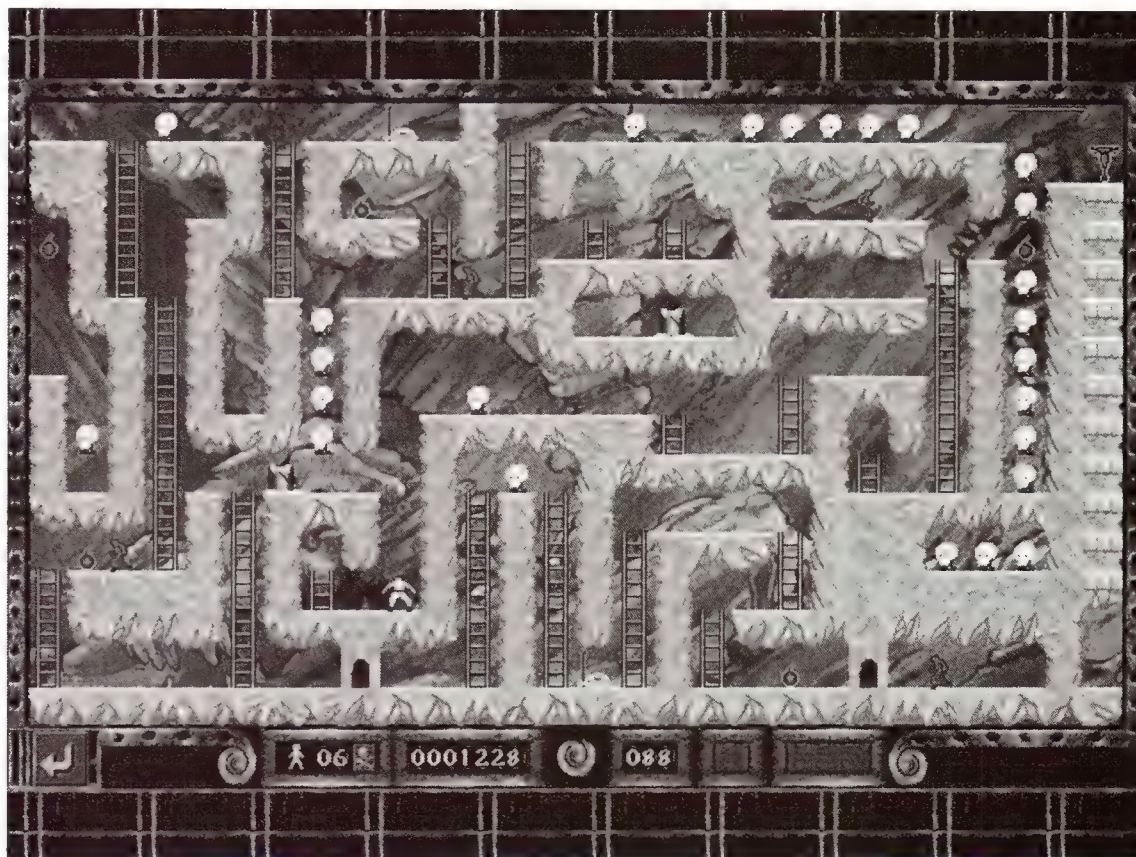
LEVEL 87

I can't believe this cavern has only one mad monk posted to guard it. Maybe they got shorthanded in Personnel. Getting around him presents

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less of a challenge than making sure that I don't get trapped in a dead end. I don't use the jackhammer at all, but the cherry bombs come in very handy.

1. Starting from deep inside a cave, I run east and jump over the ledge to the roof of a chamber. A blast from my laser pistol allows me to enter this arch-shaped enclosure. Three cherry bombs line the turf steps. I pick up every one and use one of them to blast entry to the small alcove that contains the golden skull. The blast makes room for me to toast an exit hole, and I leap down to a parallel beam that branches off from a painter's ladder. With the painter's ladder serving as my axis, I blow a turf stump to bits and rob a small chamber of a golden skull cache.
2. I climb up the central long ladder into a cavern strewn with golden skulls. While in the midst of my sweep, the lone guard attempts to intercept me, but I trap him in a ledge and continue down toward the bottom of the cavern. I sprint across a bedrock ledge on my way to the southeast corner. I intend to pick up the red skeleton key, but first I have to blast away a piece of turf that blocks access to it.
3. With the key in my pocket, I climb up the eastern long ladder to the roof beam, gathering two small bombs along the way. Looping up a second time, I traverse the roof beam to a series of alcoves wedged between two layers of bedrock. Each of the alcoves contains golden skulls. My first blast allows me to reach the first death's-head.
4. Two more blasts, and I complete my pillaging of the alcove series and drop down to the top of a painter's ladder. At the head of the ladder, I deposit the key, which I'll come back for after I continue my southwestern sweep.
5. The monk poses no threat at this point. Descending the turf steps, I make a series of blasts to clear the way to the last two golden death's-heads. In each case, I ensure I have a clearing two blocks wide so that I can continue down to the southwestern corner. When I grab the last skull, the western painter's ladder transmogrifies into a long ladder. I remember the key on the way up and unlock the red vault door in the northwestern corner.



LEVEL 88

LEVEL 88

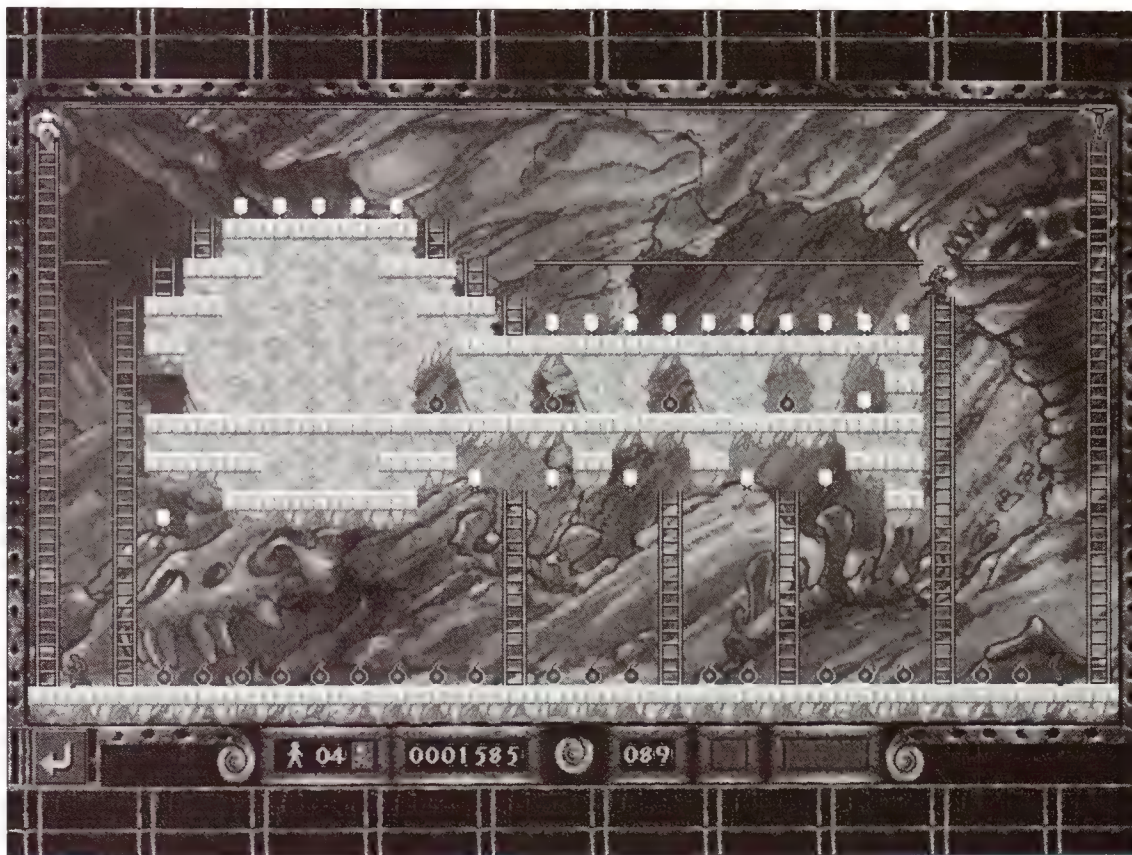
This complex cavern consists of swirls, numbers and letters. The exact significance of “32” and “D” are lost on me, but I suppose they pertain to some strange alien algorithm—or biorhythm, as the case may be. In more practical terms, I postpone using the jackhammer until the very end of the tour, when I need to drill down like the mad dentist in *Marathon Man* to the gray exit door. Despite the presence of small bombs, I don’t put them to use. Detonating explosives within tight quarters could mutilate a thatch ledge, thereby limiting my options. It also means playing Russian roulette with reincarnation as the monks rematerialize all over the place.

1. I clear an access hole to the cavern floor, then head east. Making a sine curve, I climb up and down ladders and pick up a mad monk

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snare along the way. I prepare the snare on a turf ledge in the southeastern quadrant.

2. A second monk comes to investigate the ruckus, but I plant a turf trap just below his upended buddy. One of them coughs up a golden skull, which I stash in my rucksack. I double back to the hideout in the southwestern corner and wait until the three remaining monks congregate due east. I then make a dash for the roof ledges of the northwest, where I spot another mad monk snare.
3. I prepare the snare on the roof of the "2," then lunge for the squat, lowercase "d." While the lead monk upends, I blast into the eye of the "d" and loop through a "U"-shaped tunnel to the northeastern quadrant. I run along the rooftop tier in the direction of the shaft that contains a vertical suspension of golden skulls that defies modern physics.
4. On my thief's honor, I can't find any piano wire holding up these skulls. Mysterious forces suspend them here, but they easily pluck off into my hands as I drop through the vertical shaft. Thanks to trap-door turf, I drop into an alcove containing more gold, then walk east and drop through more trap-door turf to the cavern floor. Making a similar route as before, I rise to the northeastern quadrant via a series of ladders, trapping a lone monk along the way in a turf pit. I ran past the "32," blasted through the "d," then puncture an access hole to a lone golden skull.
5. I trap a monk guard on the cavern floor, then clamber up to the roof of the "3." Here, I could use a small bomb, but it's just as easy blasting through the four squares with my laser pistol.
6. Hurtling downward, I capture a golden skull and another small bomb. With my belt full of them, I can't fit the extra cherry bomb below the "3." I detain a mad monk in a turf pit, then climb up to the roof of the "2" and sidestep east into a free fall, harvesting the last of the golden skull crop.
7. The gray exit door emerges in the southeastern corner. I make my last route in the northwestern quadrant, blast through the "d" for the last time, and navigate my way to the bedrock column. With the jackhammer firmly gripped, I plow downward to the glittering portal.



LEVEL 89

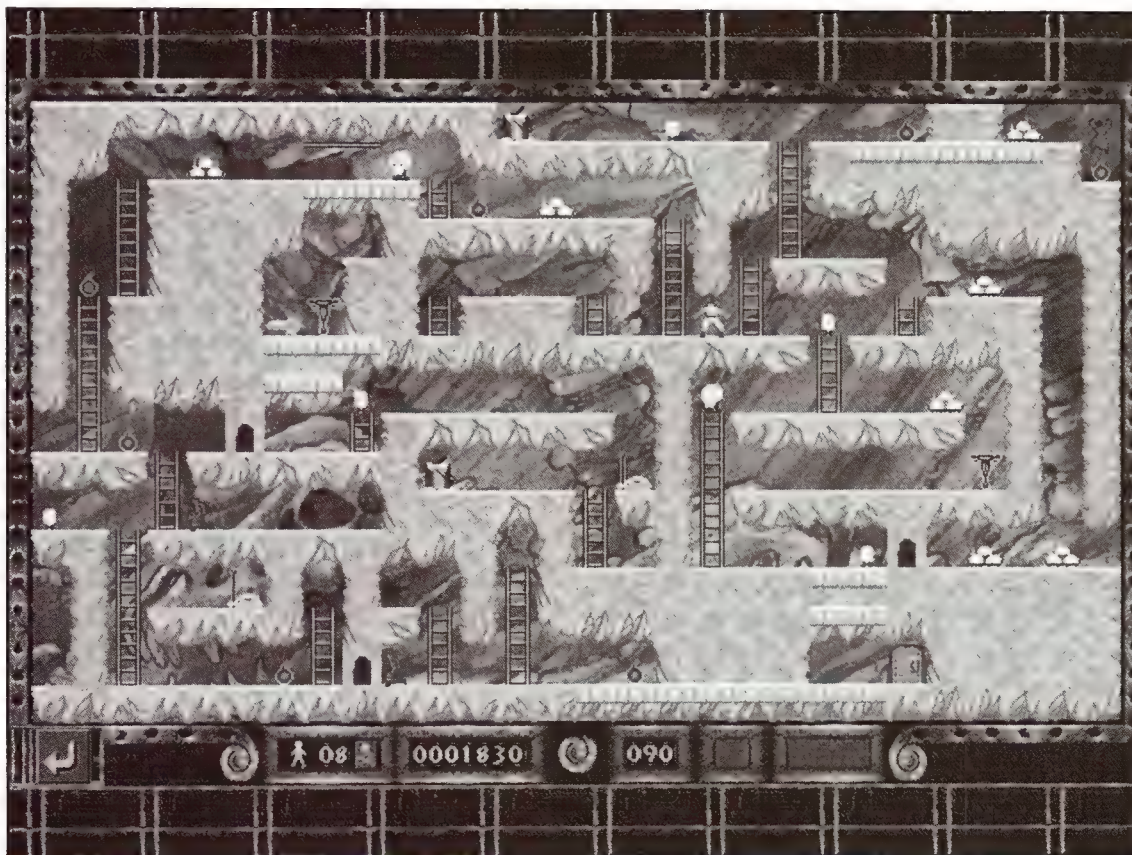
LEVEL 89

What's this? The Skeleton's Keep or the Skeleton's Key? The only golden key in this cavern is the subliminal formation of bedrock and thatch, only in this case it isn't so subliminal. In fact, it's pretty obvious. The cavern floor has been converted into a minefield, so I have to be careful of setting off any bombs down there. Could get a little prickly, to quote the English. On the bright side, I never have a shortage of cherry bombs as I go up against three very aggressive mad monks.

1. I begin in the northwestern corner; my tool of preference sits in the northeastern corner. I traverse the roof beam east, but a monk guard, climbing up the eastern long ladder, moves in swiftly to guard it. Deciding I'll come back for it later, I drop from the roof beam to an intermediate jungle beam, then lower myself to the tip of

the key. I then run west along the key's shank, shoveling up gold coins en route.

2. Continuing my momentum, I scale a series of step ladders until I reach the top of the handle. Gold coins crest the handle top. It's paramount that I reach here quickly; otherwise, the red monk patrolling the western long ladder will intercept me. Instead, he switches directions and climbs to the northwestern corner. As soon as he reaches that spot, I drop down the backside of the key handle.
3. The underside of the shank contains gold coins, as well. A row of painter's ladders, all of equal length, provide the only access. For simplicity, I refer to them as the western, central, and eastern painter's ladders, although there's a fourth painter's ladder that kisses the tip of the key. I run east to the western painter's ladder—picking up four small bombs within my first few paces—and scale to the top of the ladder. I have to climb the western painter's ladder twice to get the coins pasted on opposite sides. The central painter's ladder requires only one trip, since both are to the side, but a mad monk follows me. When he reaches a sufficient height, I step to the side and then run underneath him to the eastern painter's ladder, which also requires two trips. When finally I make it to the southeastern corner, the key's perimeter has been scrubbed clean of coinage. But that doesn't mean the cavern has been.
4. From the base of the long ladder, I can see a clear line between me and the jackhammer. I race up it, take the jackhammer, and wait on the roof beam for the pursuing monks until my muscles burn with fatigue. What follows is a vicious cycle of bloodletting and carnage as I detonate a series of small bombs. The monks keep reincarnating above the key shank, but I don't stop until they appear below it.
5. With jackhammer ready, I split open the tip of the shank and plant my first small bomb. The blast touches off a small chain reaction, clearing my path to about midway of the interior. Since I don't want to be caught in the turf regrowth, I work quickly to set the next small bomb against the turf and wait under the pinnacle of an arch in case that does happen.

**LEVEL 90**

6. Several blasts later, I finish my plundering of gold within the shank's interior. This prompts the gray exit door to materialize on the eastern third, mid-height. I hammer through the floor of the shank and land on the central painter's ladder—clear of the two mad monks on the western painter's ladder. I then run to the long painter's ladder, cross the jungle beam, and drop into the blue misty froth.

LEVEL 90

The last cavern in the Skeleton's Keep consists of a complex maze. This time, I don't hesitate to snuff the monks, whether in turf pits or explosions, because the monk portal stands inside a turf jail in the southwestern corner. While looting the cavern, I'll resort to some but not all of the

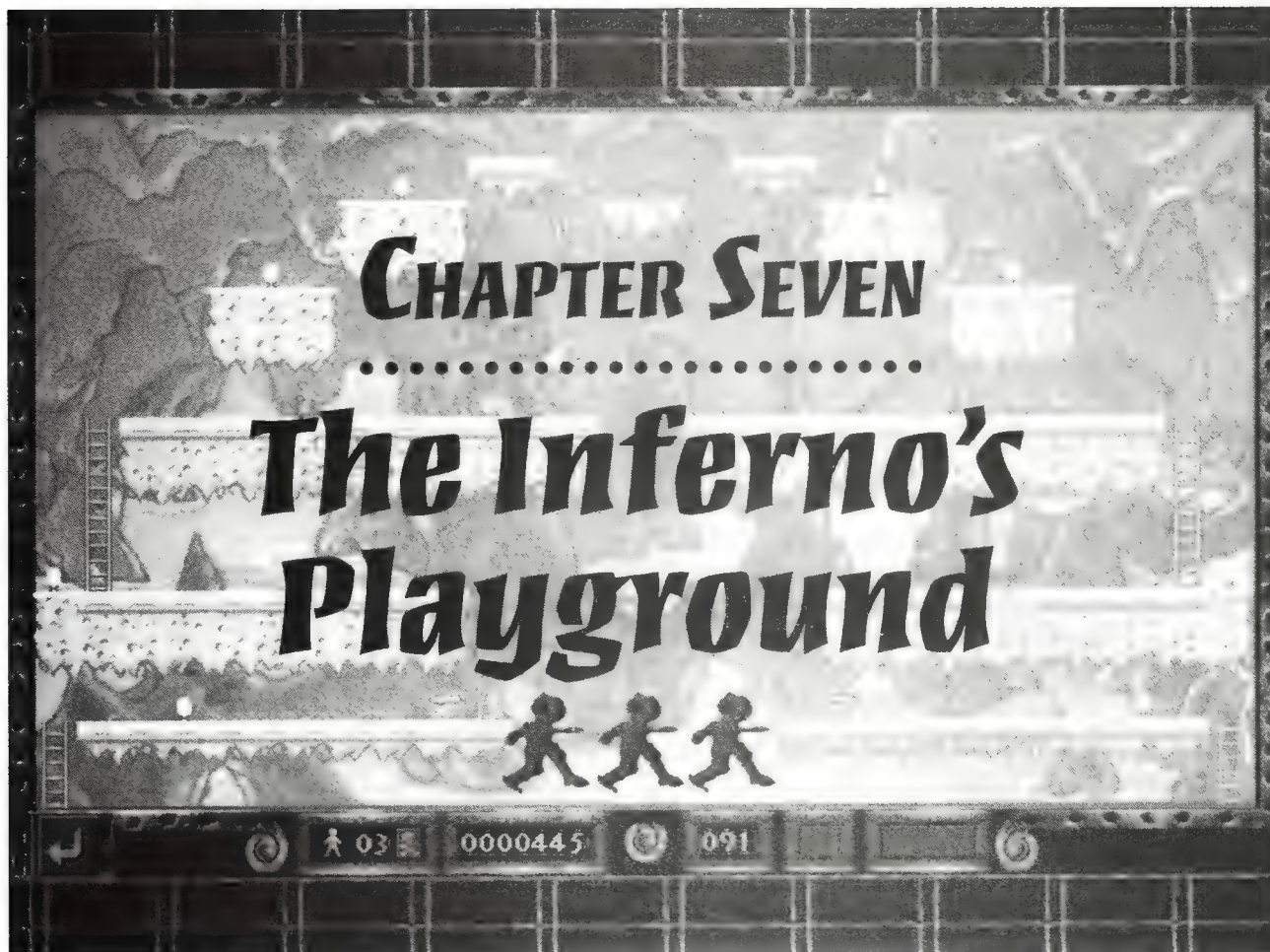
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tools. The mad monk snares and slime buckets turn out to be superfluous; I get along just fine with small bombs, my handy laser blaster, one of two jackhammers, and a little green key—green this time, not golden.

1. On the rooftop ledge, I find a gold coin to the west. To the east, a thick tuft of thatch presents a barrier, but not too formidable of one. The small bomb at hand makes passage easier as I cross to the eastern rim. The entire thatch growth consists of trap-door turf as I plummet down to the southeastern quadrant.
2. I run west over a turf ledge, stopping short on a bedrock outcropping to create a turf pit. I hop over the monk and zigzag upward a few ledges, firing once behind me to deter the fast-moving critter. I ignore the jackhammer at hand and make for the northwestern quadrant, where more fun and surprises await.
3. My second turf pit trash-compacts the monk sentry and sends him into his next life—inside a turf jail in the southwestern corner. Meanwhile, on a roof ledge in the northwest corner, I plant a bomb just beyond a patch of bedrock. The blast incinerates the monks and presents a nice entry into the chamber beneath, which contains a jackhammer and a green key. The two remaining monks reincarnate in the turf jail. I can't take both tools with me, but getting out sounds like a good idea, so I take the jackhammer. Down I go, chip by chip.
4. I loop up to the top of the key chamber, detonate a cherry bomb, and pluck the green key on my way down. The heavenly chimes ring forth. I make my way down the maze with a few strategic blasts.
5. On the cavern floor, I run east toward the green vault door only to discover a thick thatch sheath. I plant a small bomb, the result being a chain reaction that burns a sweet path to the promised land. Whistling an old gospel melody, I open the door with my little green key and dive forward to the realm of the angels.

CONCLUSION

I never did figure out all the strange symbology of the Skeleton's Keep, but my experience definitely convinces me that there is dissension in the ranks. Next, I'll enter the fiery realm of the Inferno's Playground, a molten maze one hundred degrees warmer than the Winter's Dungeon.



There's no virtue in what I do. I just can't stand the idea of the Evil Empire controlling the world as we know it, so someone has to take back all the gold. By now, I've accumulated enough gold to finance the economic recovery of the G7 nations on a scale way beyond the Marshall Plan. But who ever heard of an altruistic thief? The Peril Plan involves stuffing my bottomless rucksack with every last golden coin, chest, skull, and ingot within hand's reach. It just wouldn't be in the Viking spirit to give it all away; I also have no intention of bringing the fun and games to a close until I reach the tenth kingdom.

So far, I've experienced oppressive dampness and bone-chilling, sub-zero iciness. My odyssey next leads to an infernally hot kingdom, the Inferno's Playground. The seventh kingdom looks like hell, and I mean it literally. Bubbling lava pools and searing magma rivers

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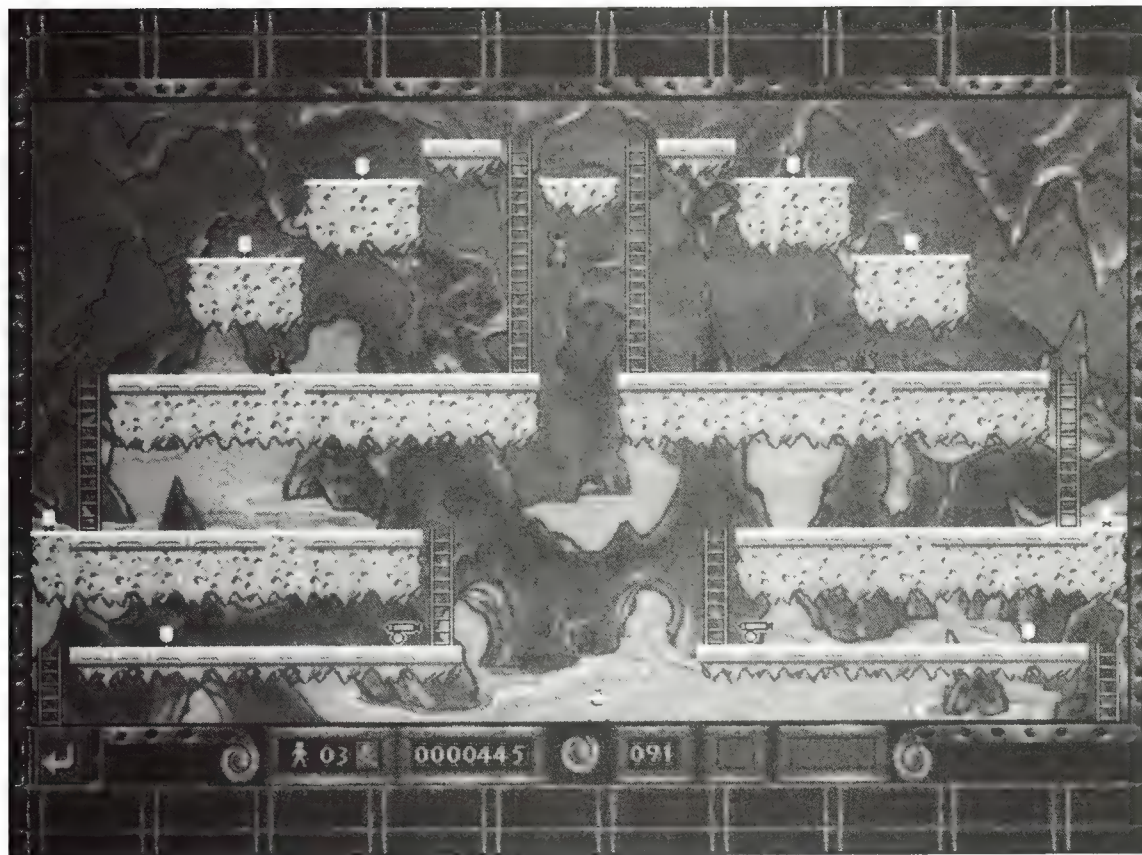
make me feel like I'm trapped inside a microwave oven wrapped in tin foil. Or maybe I've already died and am being punished by the mad monks for my sins. But how can you call this punishment when I'm becoming richer than any tycoon in history?

I don't know why the travel guide calls this place a playground, but I do find a new toy: *befuddlement gas*. It's fun to use, and I guess you can say it's fun for the monks, too. The green effluent produces the same effects as laughing gas and lasts for five seconds, continuing for yet a few more seconds after the cloud dissipates. Usually, that's enough time for me to steal my next gold item from the cavern. While a monk is woozy from this stuff, I can run right past him and he won't know the difference. Not only that, but he drops whatever gold he has on hand, just as if he were dangling from a snare. One canister lasts the whole duration; it doesn't need refilling. Best of all, the gas doesn't affect me at all.

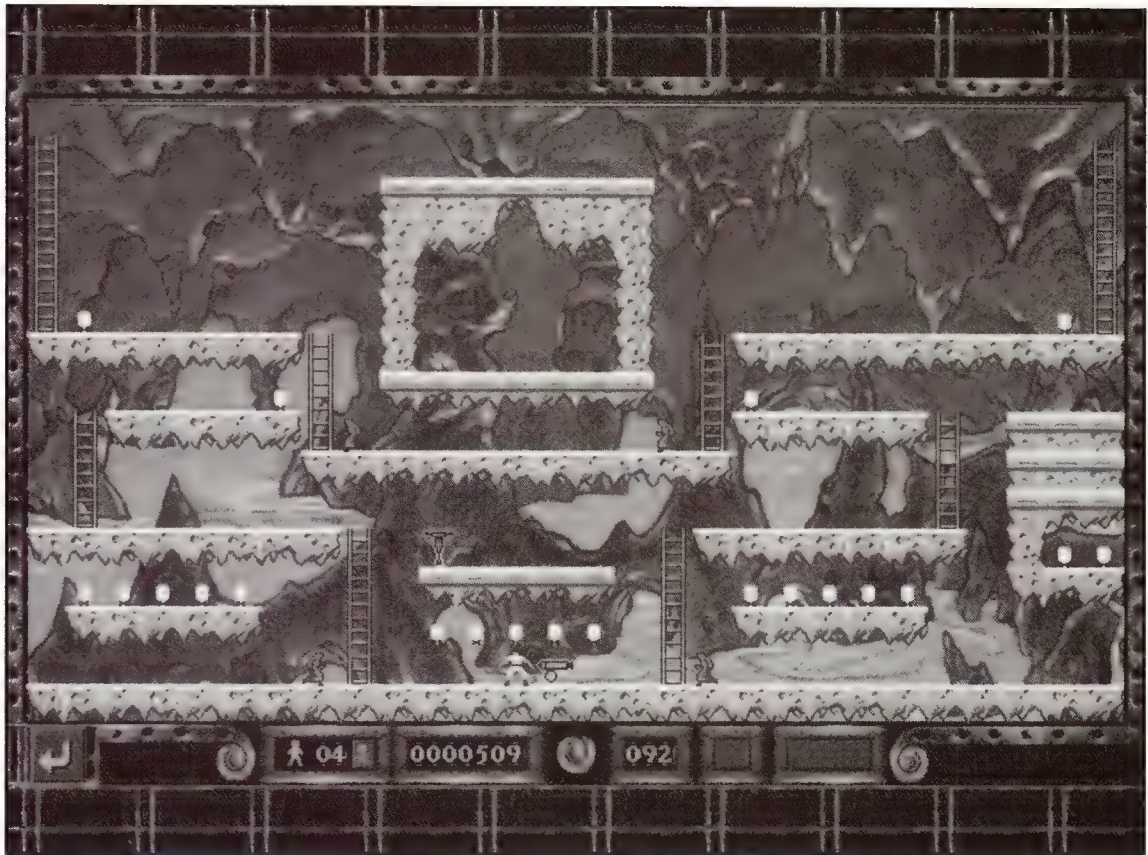
Once I gain some experience with befuddlement gas, I find it effective with large groups of monks. They don't have to be marching single file. I can also pump a series of clouds and get as many as five or six monks at a time. Whereas a small bomb rips up the turf, forcing me to wait until it grows back again, this gaseous compound leaves no marks at all. And, like mad monk snares, befuddlement gas works just as effectively on any surface, be it turf or bedrock. Additional monks have to wait for the affected monks to come to their senses, so the gas also functions as a blocking tool. It isn't perfect in all situations—for example, it can't eat through bedrock—but befuddlement gas, in addition to my other tools, definitely acts as a successful deterrent.

LEVEL 91

Pumice is a porous, lightweight volcanic rock. According to my Evil Empire travel guide, it makes up the turf portion of this and all the other caverns. From my starting stance, I gaze upon a cavern of perfect symmetry. It also provides the luxury of not one but two gas canisters from which to choose. But I only need one to rout this place.

**LEVEL 91**

1. A mad monk plunges down slightly to the west of center, so I figure I have the advantage by running east. I climb up a painter's ladder and grab the gas canister at the western edge. The monk hurries up behind, but I stop him cold with a blast of befuddlement.
2. The pumice ledge above holds a gold coin at the eastern tip, just adjacent to the eastern boundary. When I grab it, I fall through trap-door turf and come face to face again with the same monk, who is just emerging from the green fog. I squirt a fresh blast and zigzag up to the top ledge.
3. The three roof ledges all contain gold coins; I hop down each ledge to get them. But either my monk foe has become addicted to befuddlement gas, or he intends to wrestle me to the ground—or both. Either way, I nail him again with the monk repellent and sail down to the center of the cavern floor.

**LEVEL 92**

4. Meanwhile, two monks have been lurking like buzzards on the western half. I sweep the gold coin off the western tip of the second pumice ledge and discover trap turf in the identical place. Hemmed in, I pump my two pursuers and dash past them to the upper three ledges.
5. I clean up the remaining gold coins without opposition from the three monks. Twin gray exit doors emerge above, and I merely have to cross to the newly formed western long ladder to clamber to freedom.

LEVEL 92

From the cavern floor, I gaze at another example of evil symmetry and weigh my options. Gold coins line the ledges and tiers above, and I suspect the presence of trap-door turf: one false move, and my fortunes could instantly reverse. If I allow monks to get crushed to death, they can

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rematerialize inside the arched chamber. But with the aid of a jackhammer and befuddlement gas—and knowing when to use each—I elude the monks and make out like a bandit.

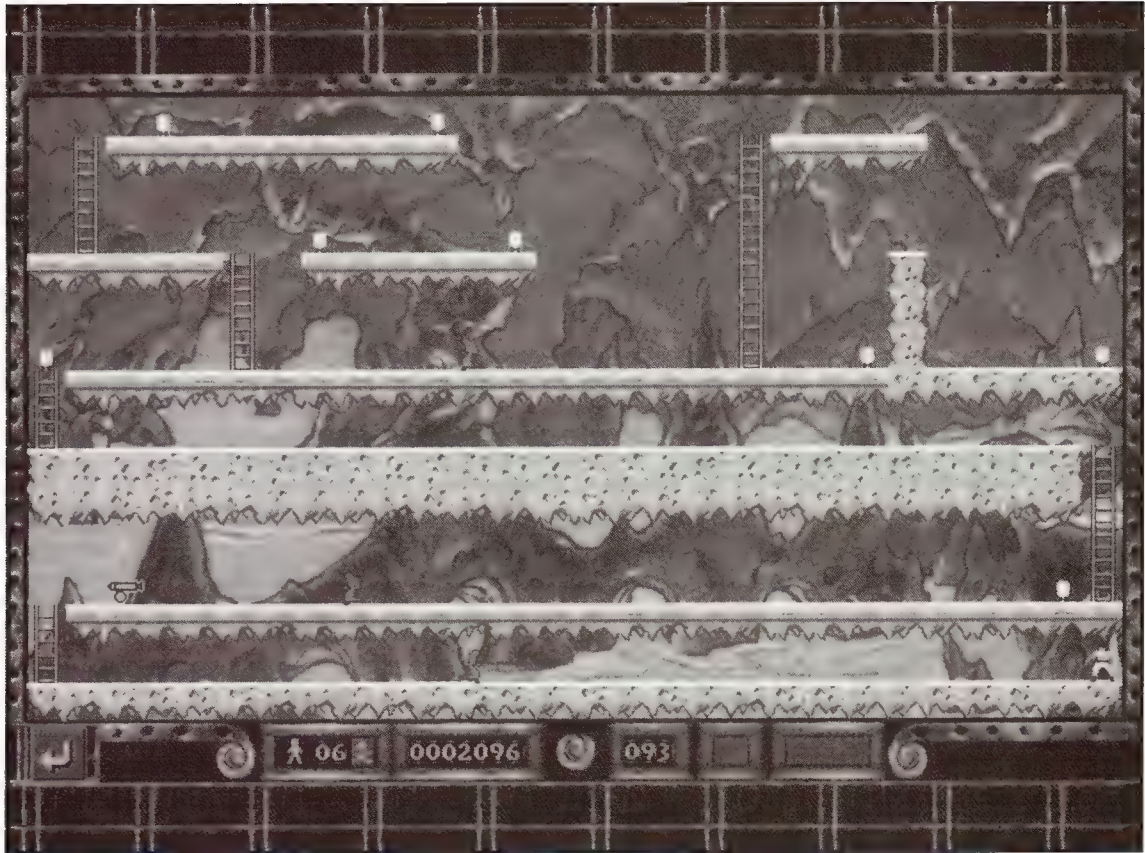
1. I begin in a pinch; two monks approach from opposite sides. I grab the gas canister and enshroud the eastern monk. I then climb up a painter's ladder to a pumice ledge. Below that ledge, a suspended ledge holds a row of gold tokens. I clear entry to the suspended ledge and gather them up, then wait on the western tip until the monks group around a painter's ladder on the opposite side.
2. With the four monks on the western side, I clean up the eastern side. I draw them up to the roof beam, then drop to the central tier. With the gas canister deposited safely behind me, I blast an entryway to the suspended bedrock ledge in the center, where a jackhammer lies.
3. I then begin my routine of spiking through the ledge to get the hanging fruit below, then loop around the western perimeter to begin on the next segment of bedrock. I work from west to east. It seems like a good idea to lure the monks each time to the cavern floor, but these beasts can be so random and unpredictable. One follows me up to the middle tier, where I have to drop my jackhammer and then douse him with fumes.
4. I continue the routine until there's nothing left of the suspended ledge and all the gold coins are in my sack. With jackhammer still in hand, I attack the roof of a thick enclosure on the east end. The bedrock yields like butter to the blade, and I snatch the two gold coins inside the alcove.
5. I exit the chamber and work my way up to where I earlier set down the befuddlement gas, and I replace it with the jackhammer. I meet the other monks halfway across the central tier and spray them into bewilderment. Running through their ranks, I pick up any gold coins that they dropped and move toward the remaining gold items on the western front.
6. With a series of blasts, I lower myself down to the western suspended ledge. When the last coin falls into my sack, twin portals appear inside the upper chamber. Unfortunately, one monk has gotten crushed in one of my exit holes—probably the first one—and reincarnates inside the enclosure. It will make for a sticky exit, to be sure.

7. I want to exchange the canister for the jackhammer to get through the roof of the enclosure, but first I gas a lone monk. While he circles in blissful confusion, I meet his two cohorts on the central tier to avoid getting cut off on the rooftop. When their body odor begins to singe my bodysuit, I race up the painter's ladder to the enclosure's rooftop well ahead of them.
8. The only way inside the enclosure is through the center tile; otherwise, I'd hit turf. I drop down to the cavern floor. The mad monk has gravitated toward the eastern exit, so I plunge into the western one and disappear into the Irish spring.

LEVEL 93

A long, "S"-shaped switchback leads to an upper tier, with suspended ledges in the northwestern quadrant and a Louganis high-dive in the northeastern one. Even though I find a canister on this level, I don't really need it on the pumice turf. My trusty turf toaster works just as well, and I'm not in any danger of the monks reincarnating in an awkward spot. But the pest spray comes in extremely handy on bedrock.

1. I space two pumice pits on the cavern floor, then run up to the first tier. I then grab the befuddlement gas canister on the western end.
2. The first trapped monk crawls out of the first trap and falls into the second pit, where he gets crushed in the regrowth. He rematerializes above and tries to intercept me on the eastern end of the bedrock tier. Had I not acquired the canister, I would have surely been beaten senseless. But the gas sends him into a wobble, and I edge past him. I sprint toward the diving board in the northeastern quadrant. Grabbing the coin in front of the pumice barrier, I climb the painter's ladder and perform a triple axle double pike.
3. Okay, I lied. I just made an ordinary jump. But when I get the gold coin on the other side, I slip down through trap-door turf. I wind up on the pumice ledge again. I could have trapped the two monks with my laser blaster, but I don't want to deal with a random reincarnation overhead. So I detain these pests with two bursts of my bug spray.

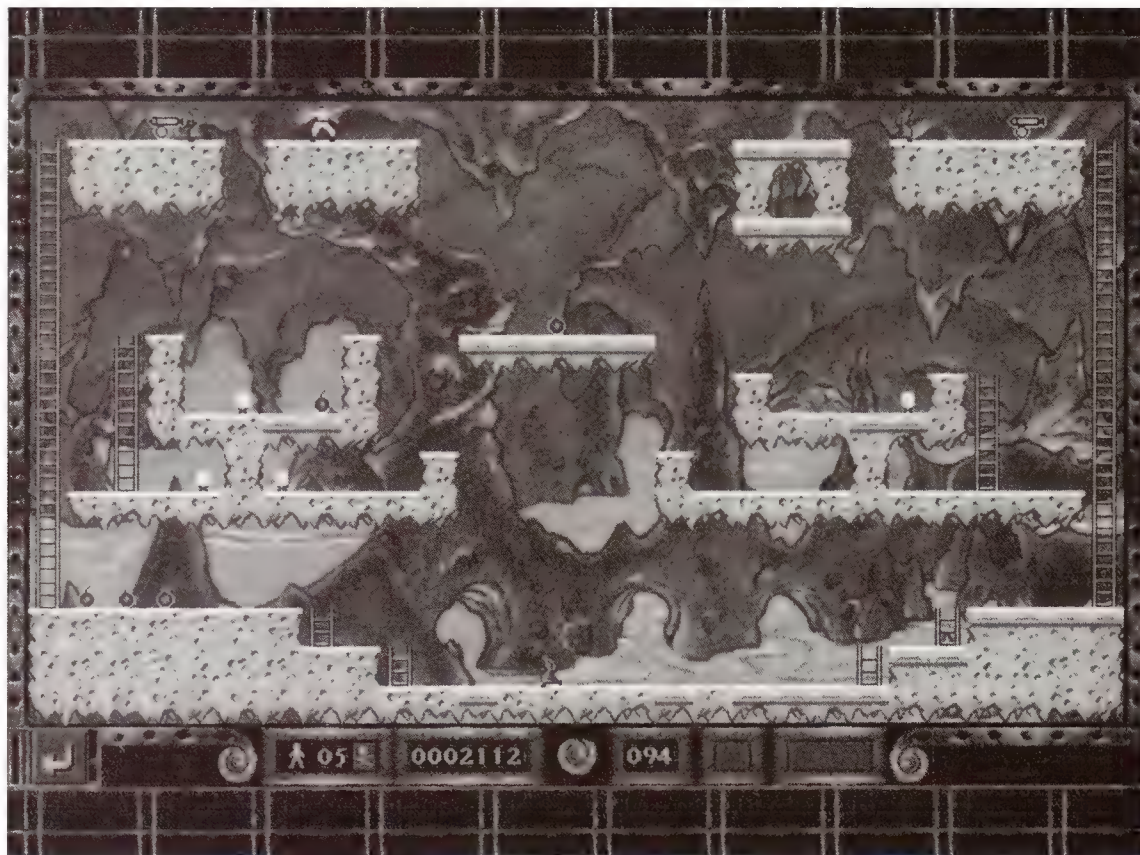
**LEVEL 93**

4. Once I get up to the upper suspended ledges, I leave the three mad roaches in the dust. The gray exit door emerges in the northeastern quadrant, so I make another high dive and climb up to the supreme blue halo.

LEVEL 94

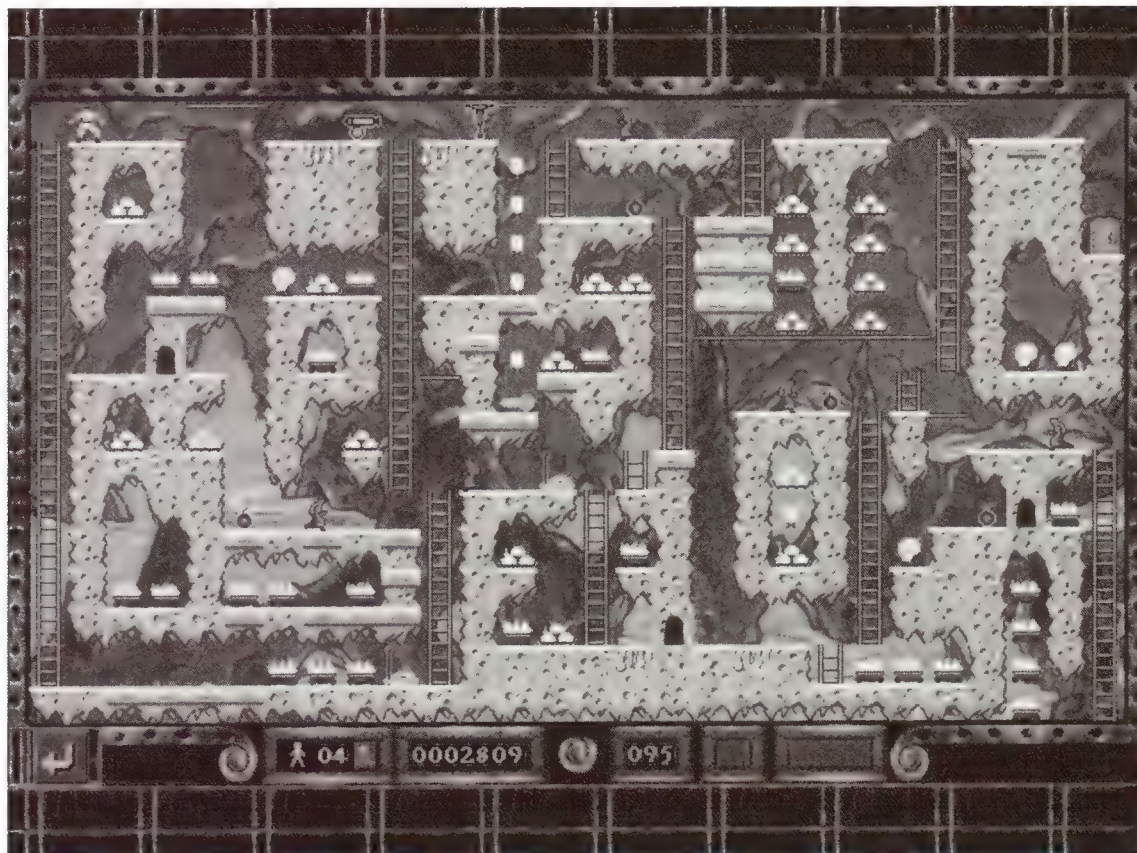
Sometimes in life we need to make a leap of faith. But do you ever get the feeling, in hindsight, that you should have leaped the other way? I waste a life on this level just for that reason. The touchdown posts present unique problems that require a well-timed combination of turf pits and small-bomb explosions.

1. I start on an island ledge. The mad monk on the neighboring ledge walks toward the western long ladder when I gesture east. The extra

**LEVEL 94**

distance gives me just enough time to leap into the well below, plant a small bomb, and fire a turf pit before the monk follows me in. He lands in the pit only seconds after the blast.

2. Two gold coins straddle the trunk of the “Y”-shaped well. I jump down and fire an exit hole under the eastern coin. The mad monk, meanwhile, remains inside the well. One ledge below, another monk falls sidelong into a pumice pit especially prepared for him. I then collect the small bombs while hopping over his head.
3. Trap-door turf makes it impossible to get to the coin on this side of the trunk. To get it, I’d have to jump back in the well again with the monk. I ascend the long ladder and pick up the nerve gas before getting the nerve to leap down to the viper pit again. One blast anesthetizes him long enough for me to clear an access hole directly above the coin.
4. I drop through the trap-door turf and run to the eastern long ladder. The ledge that crests the ladder positions me over the second “Y”-

**LEVEL 95**

shaped well. When I take the gold coin, the gray exit door materializes inside a small pumice enclosure. I drop through the trap door toward the cavern floor.

5. The trap-door turf prevents me from reaching the painter's ladder that leads from the eastern "Y" up to the enclosure. But as it turns out, I need the small bomb on the central turf ledge. While I wait at the foot of the newly materialized central painter's ladder, the three monks clump on the western long ladder. I take the bomb from the ledge and position it at the highest rung of the second painter's ladder. The explosion opens up the interior, and I jump into the digital portal.

LEVEL 95

Too bad I left my decryption guide above ground. Otherwise, I might be able to make sense out of the scrambled letters of the alphabet that bedeck the halls of this cavern. If the rebel faction is trying to

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communicate some vital piece of information, they've failed to convey it to me. To make matters more complex, the staggering abundance of gold in this cavern resists orderly sequence and makes for a somewhat confused tactical approach. Trying my best, I divide the cavern in sixths and work from west to east.

1. I seize the gas canister in the northwestern quadrant via a monkey bar, then backtrack via the same route until I dangle over a narrow bedrock ledge that contains treasure chests. Jumping down from there, I blast entry into the top of an uppercase "B."
2. I plunder the "B" and drop down to the cavern floor. Three monks come in for the kill, but I dope them up with a blast of befuddlement gas. While they totter and reel, I scamper up the western long ladder and toast entry into the uppercase "P."
3. I exit the "P" and drop down to a small overhang that contains a stack of gold ingots. Farther below, a rectangular enclosure adheres to the eastern edge of the "B." It contains a cache of treasure chests. While the monks study my movements from the western long ladder, I climb inside the enclosure, empty it of its spoils, and then blast an entry to the cavern floor.
4. I find a mad monk snare near where I landed. Actually, I passed it before but didn't have time to use it then. Now I do have time. I drop the canister and curve the bow of the snare to lock it in place. By the time the lead monk upends, I've ventured over the backside of an uppercase "E." A painter's ladder divides it from some small ledges. I take a second snare and prepare it at the base of the ladder just as a monk from the eastern side of the cavern emerges from a patch of turf tar.
5. I look over the top of the painter's ladder and see a monk coming in fast. Since I set down the canister, I've been armed only with my laser blaster. The monk falls sidelong into a turf pit while I finish scouring the "E" sector. I have to trap the persistent devil again on the floor of the fifth letter of the alphabet. Once finished, I climb to the top of a mid-elevation, uppercase "P" and pierce through the eye to get the gold inside.
6. Moving east, I now focus on the north-central sixth, where an uppercase "S" stands. I want the jackhammer near the roof. I exchange it

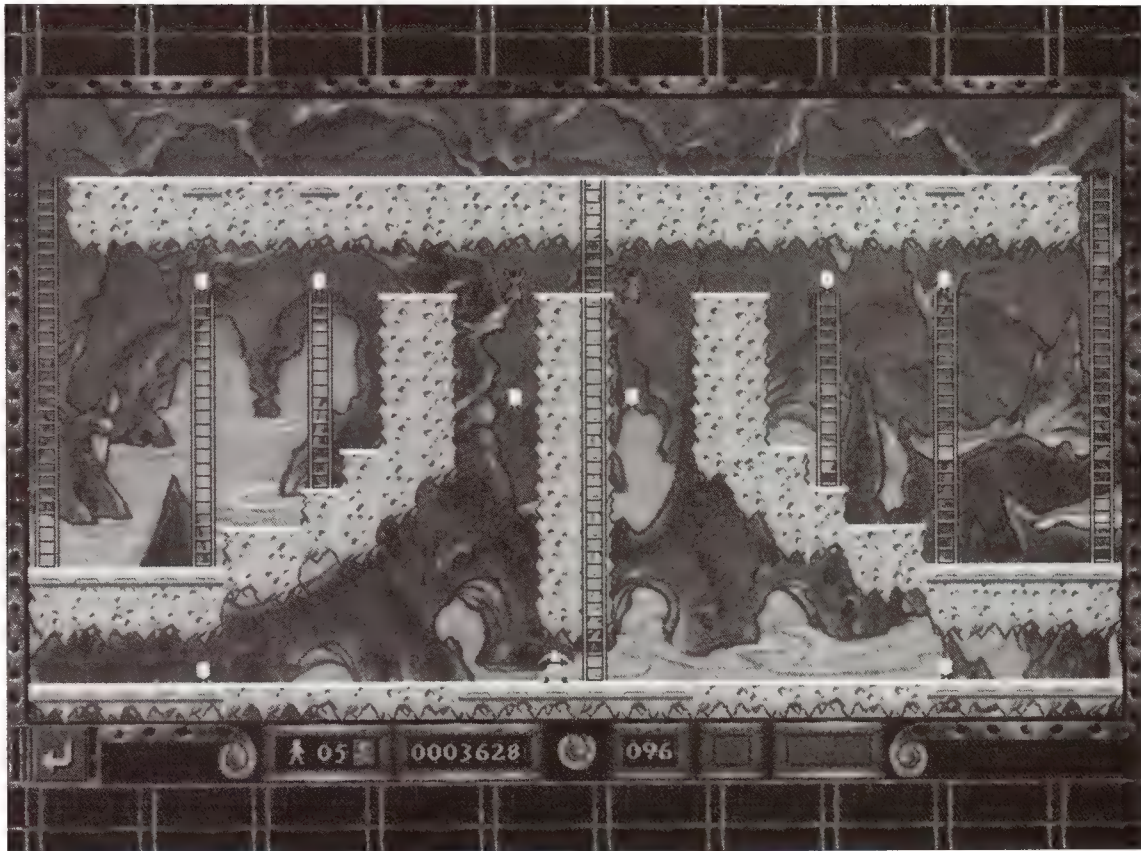
for the canister and drop down a vertical suspension of gold coins to a bedrock overhang. Spiking through that, I create an exit that I'll use later, when I come back for the green key.

7. In the northeastern sixth, I find an uppercase "T" with gold tokens hanging down like earrings. I remove the eastern earring first, then loop up via a monkey bar and remove the western earring.
8. By now, I have two monks hanging from snares and three other monks confined to the western half. This gives me the freedom to clean through the eastern third of the cavern. Dropping from the monkey bar, I penetrate the inside of an "O," then blast my way through a free-form structure in the southeastern quadrant to a large enclosure that contains some gold. Only a few gold pieces in the "S" formation remain.
9. In hindsight, I probably should have taken the gold key and deposited it in the eastern quadrant somewhere. But I don't face heavy opposition from the mad monks. Befuddlement gas stalls them long enough for me to get inside the "S." I wait for them to gather on a painter's ladder due west, then exchange the canister for the green key in mid-flight. From there, I bolt to the northeastern corner and drop in front of the green vault door. The key works in the lock, and I dive into the cleansing bath of shimmering light.

LEVEL 96

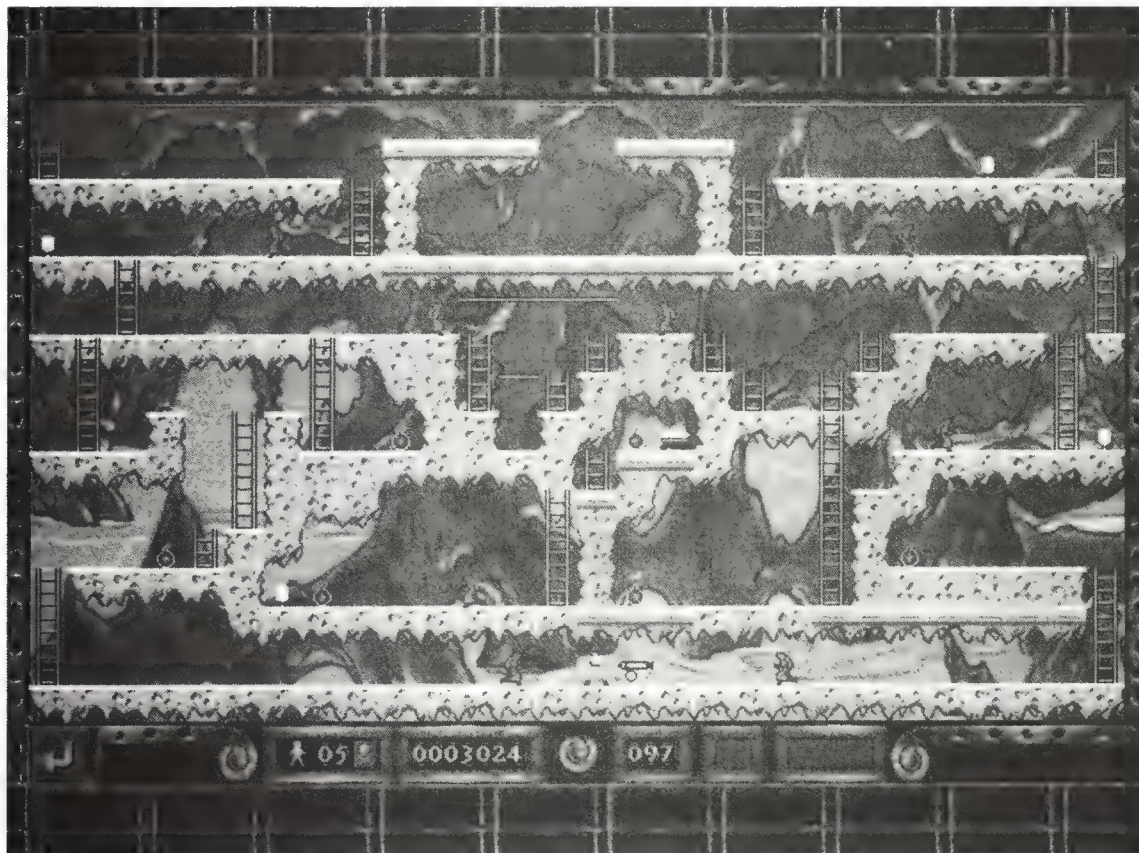
If it weren't for the slightly off-kilter column, this cavern would have perfect symmetry. The spare design belies the presence of trap-door turf, which presents a more frustrating obstacle than the two monk cops who patrol this playground.

1. I get off to an uneventful start. While the monks float down to the cavern floor, I ascend the central long ladder and run to the eastern ventricle, where I drop down to the pumice ledge.
2. Inside the ventricle, two painter's ladders sprout like spruces toward the rooftop tier. Each one holds a gold coin at the top. I grasp the first one, but discover trap-door turf in between the painter's ladders. Rather than start over again from the cavern floor,

**LEVEL 96**

I backtrack to the rooftop tier and penetrate the turf with my laser pumice punisher. A descending series of two lets me fashion my own trap door to the crest of the ladder, where I nab the coin.

3. I find a gold coin on the cavern floor and snatch it. Two monks race toward me, but I catch them in a pumice pit, then race up the central long ladder. I pluck a coin from suspended animation just east of the long ladder, then drop to the cavern floor again. The monks come back for the same action again, but after hopping overhead, I climb the full length of the long ladder and head for the western ventricle.
4. Given the mirror configuration, I simply repeat the same procedure on the western side, doubling back up to the rooftop tier to carve a descending series down to the inside coin. When I drop down to the cavern floor, I find a gold coin the same distance from the long ladder as the one on the other side. This time, however, I space two pits for the monks and sail overhead to the middle of three gray exit doors.



LEVEL 97

LEVEL 97

At first glance, it doesn't seem like this cavern stores much gold, but over half of it is embedded in the pumice turf. Small bombs help reveal their location, but I also wouldn't get very far without the befuddlement gas. It helps keep the monks at bay while I search and find the lost gold.

1. Surrounded, I grab the canister and douse the eastern monk in a cloud, then walk to the bomb just beyond him to wait for the other troops to arrive. By the time the cloud fades, I've already set off a small bomb inside a small cave just above. The blast reveals three gold coins, which I lap up with relish.
2. Two craggy pockets, large enough to be chambers, lie due west of me. The monks don't follow me as I jump through the gap and plant a small bomb next to the turf partition. The blast sets off a bomb embedded in turf above me, but more importantly reveals a gold coin. At the west end of the second pocket, I find a small bomb and a

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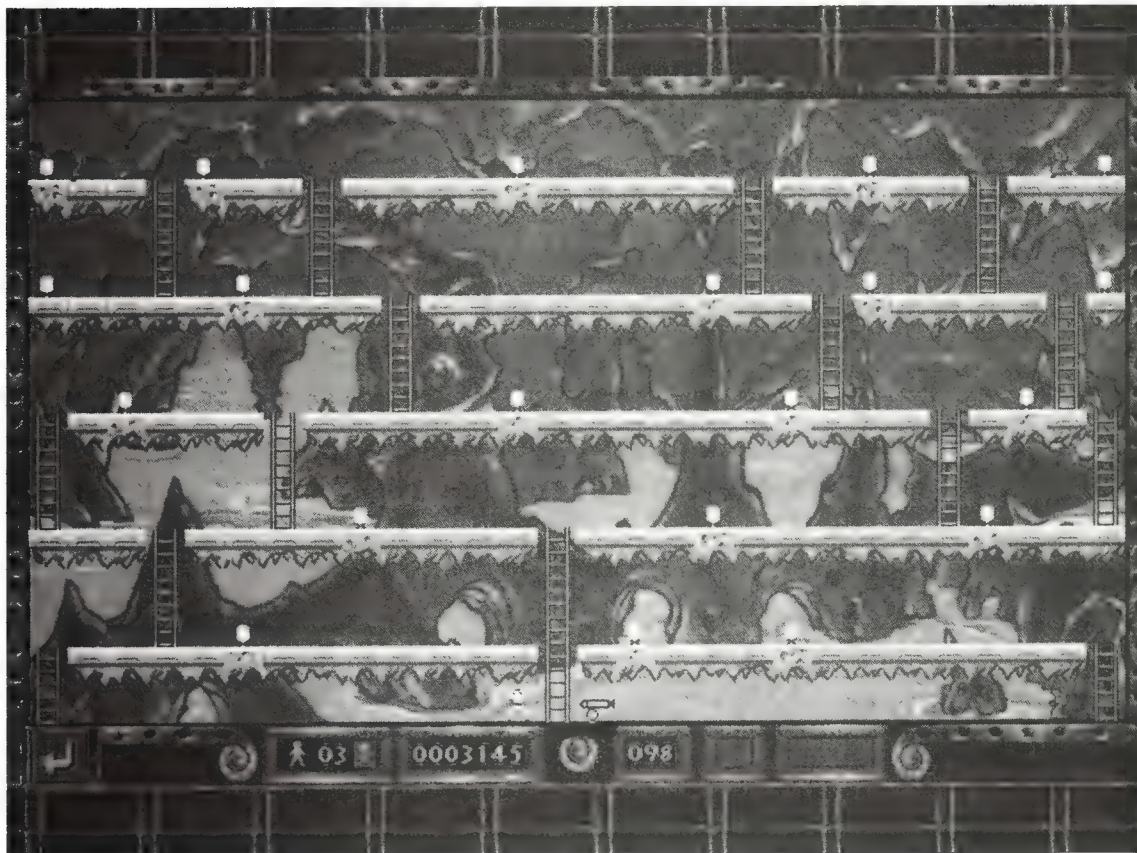
second gold coin, but when I reach out for the latter I fall through trap-door turf. Thinking fast, I spray the monks with gas in the southwestern corner.

3. While the monks careen in the green halo, I climb up ladders and run over ledges until I come over the roof of the western pocket, picking up several small bombs along the way. I pierce through the roof and drop into the chamber again, then plant a small bomb at the top of a painter's ladder. The blast creates a wide opening into a small alcove, which contains a chest of treasure.
4. I exit to the eastern pocket and climb the painter's ladder to a higher ledge, where two monk sentries stand guard over a single gold coin. Before I can get into a stance to pump them with befuddlement gas, I drop through trap-door turf to the ledge below. No matter. I take care of them down there and pick up the gold coin that I came for in the first place.
5. One gold coin remains on the western flank. I traverse the roof beam to the northwest corner, where I trap a mad monk in a pumice pit, then blast an adjacent pit to drop to the ledge that contains the coin. Twin gray exit doors materialize inside a large chamber with a large opening on top. I merely have to cross back via the roof beam and drop into the safe enclosure.

LEVEL 98

My confidence soars when I first glance at this Inferno's Playground cavern. Gold coins line the tiers, and what monk could interfere with my efforts while I have befuddlement gas on hand? But then realization dawns: every patch of pumice turf is trap-door turf. It's impossible to make a straight horizontal line from one end of the cavern to the other, unless you happen to be standing on the cavern floor. Taking deliberate steps, I have to work my way carefully up to the top and avoid stepping on pumice unless it makes sense to drop to the next tier.

1. First, I want to consolidate the opposition on the central painter's ladder, the longest ladder in the cavern. One monk strays above, so I drop down to the southwest corner.

**LEVEL 98**

2. Eventually, they line up single file behind me. But before the lead monk can seize hold of me, I charge up a series of painter's ladders that run diagonally from the southwest corner. I begin with the northwest corner, avoiding a coin that lies above a turf patch and going for the two collinear coins touching the western boundary.
3. Three monks stand motionless on the central long ladder, one in the southeast corner. I work my way over the top center, down through several trap doors, until I climb up a series of painter's ladders that lead me up to the northeast corner.
4. The northeast quadrant proves more challenging than the northwestern one. I have to climb two different series of diagonally placed (in the direction of the backslash key:\) painter's ladders, until the tip of the last coin comes within reach. It's a trying journey.
5. To remove the last gold coins in the center of the cavern, I trek down a roundabout way to the cavern floor. I need to get the monks

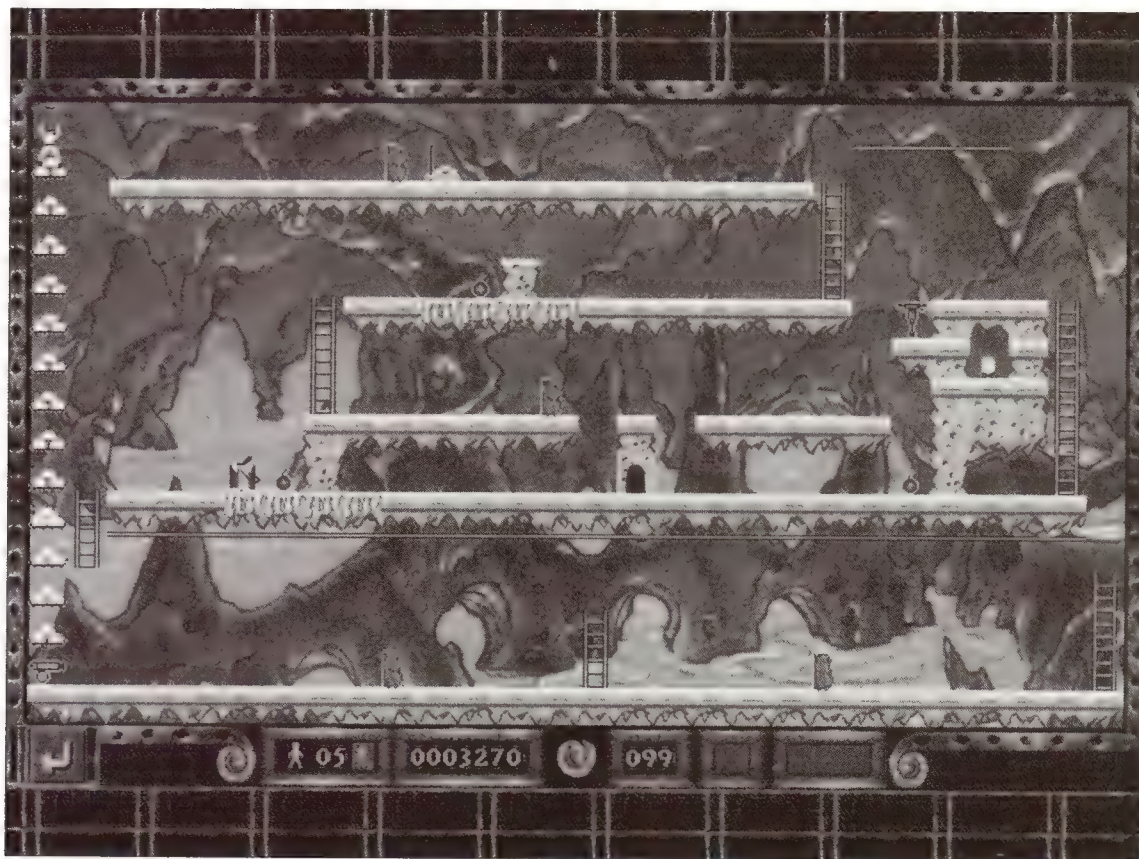
out of the way, since this is the most heavily defended section of the cavern. Through a mixture of befuddlement gas and trap-door tricks, I succeed in getting them lined up single file in the southeastern corner.

6. Ladder positioning helps me keep the monks in that corner as they switch toward that direction once I push the magic button, about mid-elevation. Getting to the two coins proves uncomplicated, but one coin in the center requires me to head to the southwest diagonal series of painter's ladders.
7. Fortunately, the monks aren't holding out on me. I have all the coins rounded up. But wouldn't you know it? The gray exit door arises in the top center of the cavern. I lure the monks to the southwest corner because I want to make sure they can't head me off at any pass. Once accomplished, I bolt up the southwest diagonal series to get out of this madhouse!

LEVEL 99

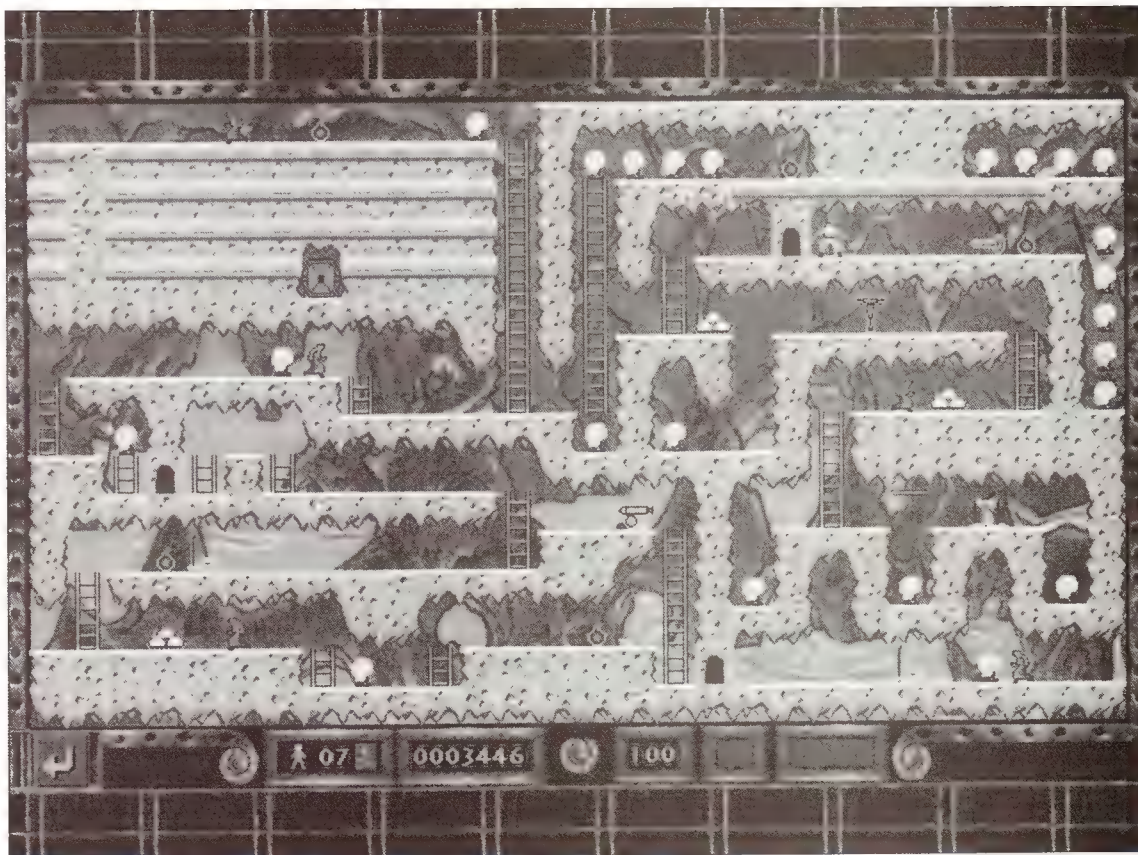
I know I'm not supposed to say this, but I really like this cavern. Granted, I'm only supposed to care about the money, but I love these brain teasers. They're fun. The monk who designed this place probably intended to frustrate a guy like me. Unfortunately for him, I'm up to the challenge.

1. What's that minty fresh smell? No, it's not Binaca. It's befuddlement gas. Two fresh squirts of this mentholated mind-gel, and I have Dweezil and Dimple Toes doing the Time Warp again. Within seconds, Davro and Devron come down from the upper ledges. With no threat of interference, I can focus on the fun stuff upstairs.
2. I traverse the monkey bar while Dweezil waves to me from the painter's ladder. On the ledge, I plant a small bomb against a turf barrier. The bomb explodes in a starburst. The wall grows back in time to lock out the four jealous monks on the other side. Inside, I discover an interesting dilemma: how to get the jackhammer off the ledge and onto the rooftop of the small enclosure with only one small bomb.



LEVEL 99

3. I check my Tag Heuer watch and start countdown. The blast clears out the turf barrier. Like a wild animal recently escaped from a cage, I dash through the opening, climb the painter's ladder, cross the rooftop, jump down to the ledge, exchange the canister for the jackhammer, plow through the ledge, drop to the tier below, and run through the opening again before it regenerates. I've completed the cycle. I'm ready to become a warrior.
4. Meanwhile, Dweezil, Dimple Toes, Davro, and Devron, in no particular order, offer me no congratulations whatsoever. Some people just can't handle it when other people succeed. I ram my violently jerking steel rod through the eastern wall of the small enclosure, take the gold, and watch the blue window come to life. But first, I have to dispense with the quadruplets. I left behind the befuddlement gas, and it's not worth going back for. Instead, I amble down to the



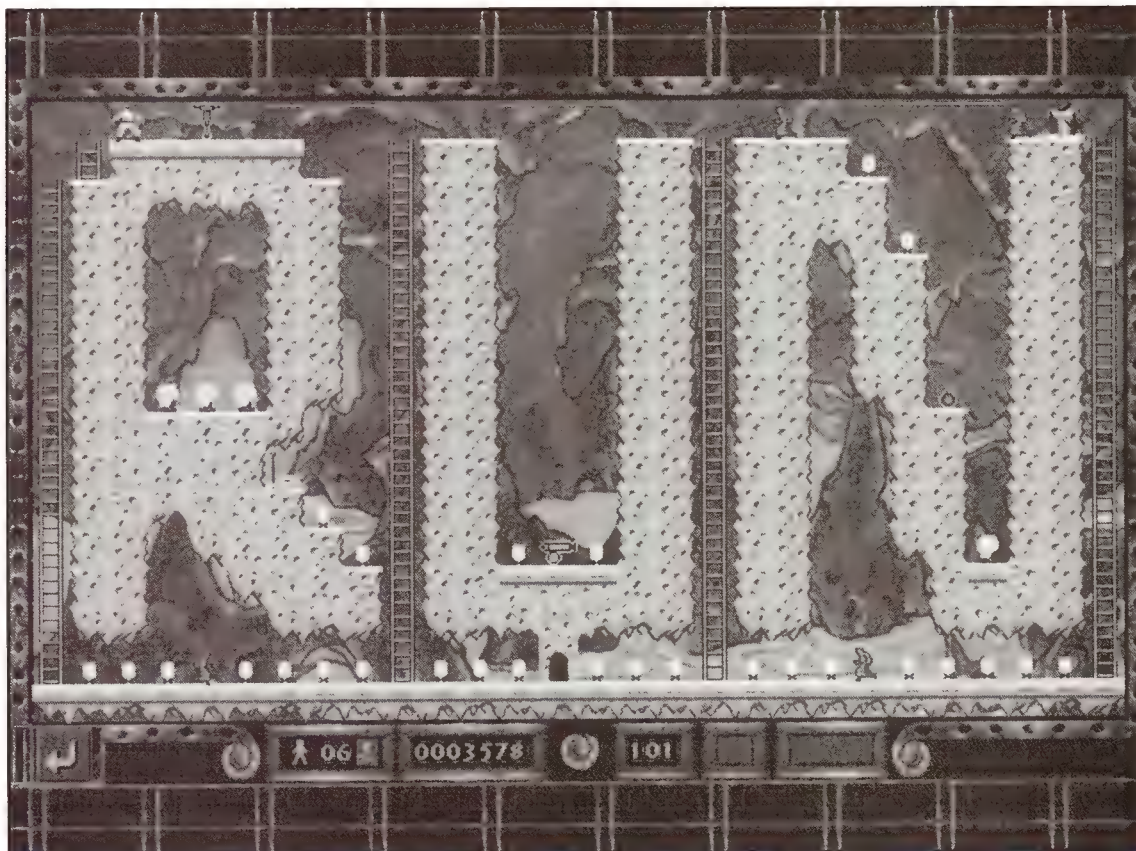
LEVEL 100

monkey bar and wait for the monks to crawl toward me. Then, in another example of my consistently well-timed gestures, I let go of the bar, and so do they, only I'm a lot closer to the ladder than they are. Within seconds, I've scaled the central long ladder and plunged headlong into the Infinity Fizz.

LEVEL 100

This is a complex maze with a simple solution. All I have to do is toast the monks in a small bomb blast, and they'll be locked away in solitary confinement. But there are other dangers. In fact, the hundredth cavern in my raid of the Evil Empire stands out because of the way I have to use all the tools and resources I can muster—except, oddly enough, the one that I need least and yet have grown so fond of using: befuddlement gas!

1. I find a small bomb sitting next to the red key and hook it on my belt. I then loop up to the top tier and plant a small bomb at the foot of a huge glob of pumice. The explosion ignites a chain reaction that clears the way to the golden turkey chute on the other side.
2. I see a forlorn monk sitting in solitary confinement, and of course my heart goes out to him. For that reason alone, I feel overcome by this strong sympathetic urge to convey his four colleagues to the same tightly confined quarters, so that he won't have to stay there alone. After hurtling through trap-door space, I land in the south-eastern corner and immediately put a mad monk snare to good use. The first monk in the neighborhood upends, forcing his friends to pause momentarily. And when they come out of that pause, I light the fuse to the extra small bomb that I picked up next to the skeleton key upstairs and consume them all in the blast.
3. Together at last, the five mad monks look like a vine of pickled and withered red bell peppers in an old, dusty Italian restaurant. With them firmly out of the way, I suck the southwestern quadrant clean of every gold item within range. I'll rise up through this snake-like switchback several times again as I make my rounds collecting various tools and stealing loot along the way.
4. Next, I need to get my tools in place, because when the time comes to use them, there won't be much time. First, I grab the jackhammer and place it directly above the red vault door. Then I find the red key again and place it slightly east. I want the key to be conveniently within reach, but it's very important that I not place it west of the jackhammer. Later on, I'll drill a hole through solid bedrock, and there will be no way to retrieve the key from the other side.
5. To complete the picture, I need the slime bucket. So far, I've used slime to slow down my red-frocked opponents. But slime has another purpose as well: it's impervious to small bomb explosions. I pour the slime underneath the shaft-to-come as a protective sheath, to shield my landing pad from the effects of the blast. In the rush to clear the way to the vault door, I might inadvertently get squeezed flat in the turf regrowth. There is also the small matter of some gold in a southeast chamber, which I easily pocket after a well-positioned small bomb blast. I have small bombs in excess, so I'm not worried about using one there.

**LEVEL 101**

6. All my preparation has paid off. I position a small bomb precisely under the red vault door. This will clear the pumice layer underneath the door that no jackhammer could ever cut through. With no time to waste, I blaze up to the rooftop tier and bash through the bedrock with the jackhammer. As predicted, the slime holds up nicely after the blast. To finish, I grab the red key and wait for the pumice to grow back, then jump into the well and plunge into the watery depths behind the red door.

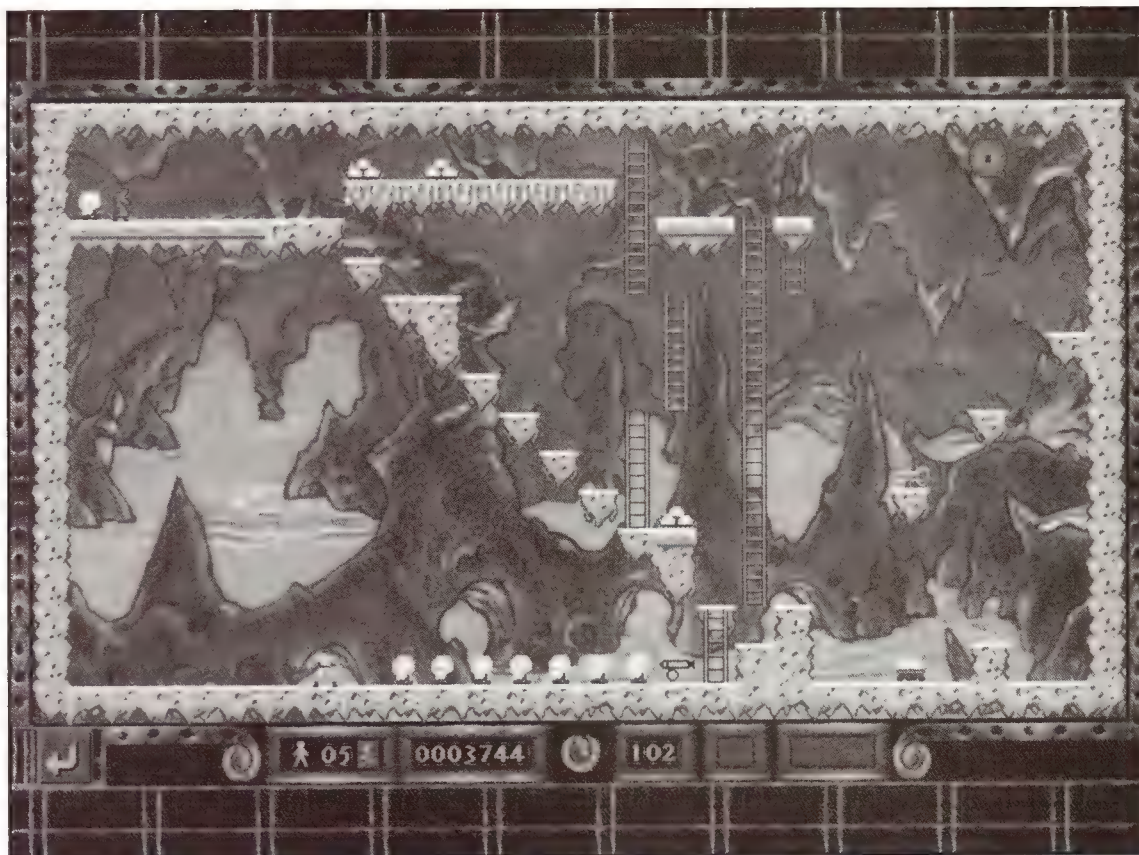
LEVEL 101

The sign says “RUN” in enormous block letters. That’s what I do all the time. I’m a lode runner. Did they expect me to walk through the Evil Empire? Who are these people? Maybe the rebel faction is trying to

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persuade me to run for president. But to tell you the truth, I think I'd rather steal gold than the public confidence—not that I'm cynical about the ability of politicians to effect change. How did we get on this subject anyway?

1. After grabbing the jackhammer, I position myself on the western long ladder so that two monks will position themselves on the two inner long ladders. I then dash over the tops of the letters until I reach the slime bucket in the northeast corner. Sliding down the eastern long ladder, I splash the slime underneath the "N."
2. The four monks don't all come at once, but I bait them for as long as it's safe in the southeastern corner. I then scale up the eastern long ladder and drop onto the first ledge. I hop down these narrow ledges until I come to the bedrock bottom, where I drill through the rock. Though there is turf on the bottom, it turns out to be trap-door turf, so I'm in the clear. I wait for the monks to convene in the slime a second time, then loop back up to the roof beam and head a little farther west until I dangle over the "U."
3. Repeating a similar procedure, I clear the bottom of surrounding gold and drill over the hideout. Though there is gold nearby, I'll come back for it later. It just isn't safe to take it now with monks nearby. Instead, I run to the southwestern corner, wait for the monks to regroup, then charge up the western long ladder. With the jackhammer, I carve a nice shelf in the bedrock for a small bomb, then wait farther down the ladder. The blast creates a nice opening, and I jump into the eye of the "R."
4. I clean up the eye, then blast out and scoop up the gold on the leg of the "R." Though risky, I run for the westernmost gold coin, then sweep up all the remaining gold coins on the cavern floor. Some may argue that I take this to an extreme, but I wait for the monks to regroup behind me in the southeastern corner, waiting for them to get thick into the slime, then charge up the eastern long ladder and traverse west to the gray exit door in the northwestern corner.

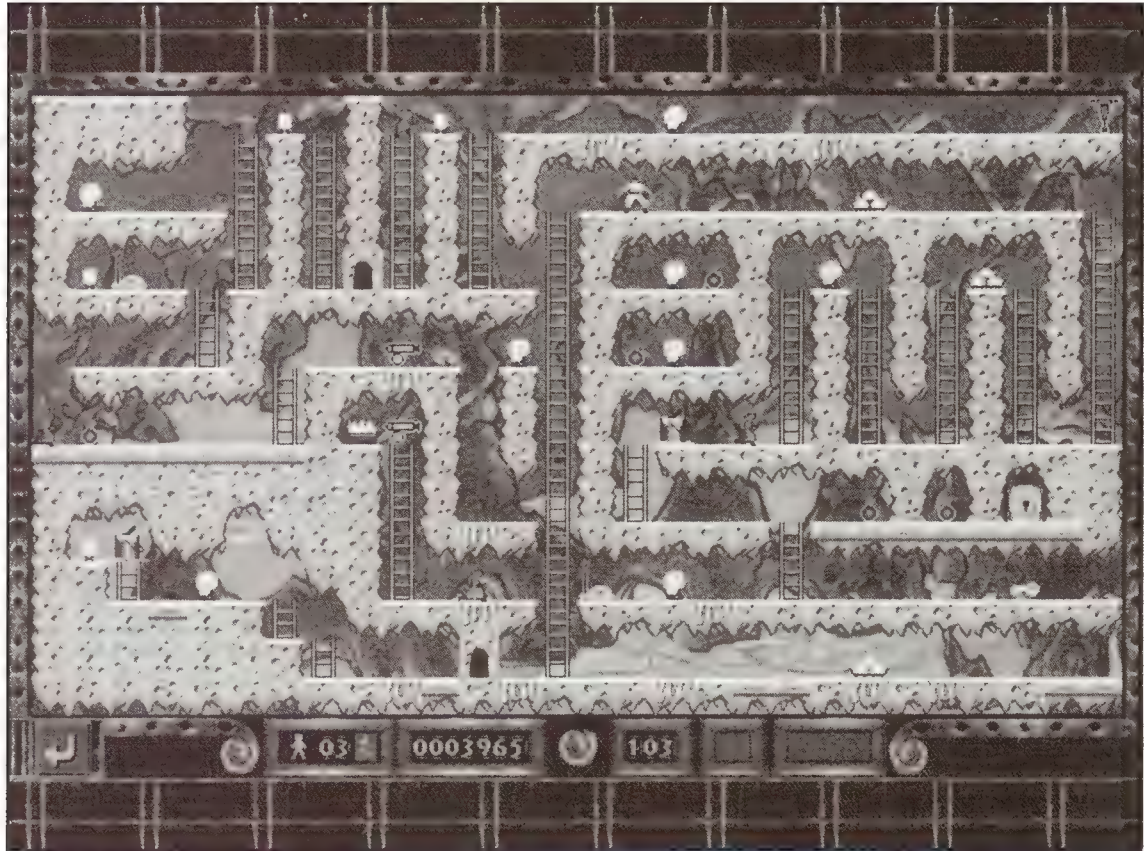


LEVEL 102

LEVEL 102

The caverns grow progressively more difficult in every kingdom. This Inferno's Playground cavern seems, shall we say, rather basic at first. But I've learned by now that looks, especially at this level, can be deceiving. The key to unlocking the gold treasure in this cavern involves scrupulous digging for buried treasure.

1. I come up to the turf embankment near the center of the cavern floor and realize that it might harbor gold. After I level it with my laser blaster, I find a gold coin. Moving across, I stash the gold coin and the treasure chest before the embankment grows back. I then climb a disjointed long ladder—it looks like a broken leg that hasn't set properly—and sidestep to the west to collect a stack of gold bars that sit on a pumice step.

**LEVEL 103**

2. I climb up the disjointed long ladder a second time and walk over a ridge thick with turf tar. Two stacks of gold ingots find their way into my sack. I then hop down to the monk ridge and fill his lungs with befuddlement gas. While he gropes around in the green haze, I steal the golden skull behind him.
3. Invisible ladders come to light, and the path to the red vault door becomes clear. I blast an exit to the cavern floor before the monk comes back to his senses. I exchange the canister for the key on a small ledge and disappear behind the red mask.

LEVEL 103

I've seen this complex maze in complex guises in other worlds. The main difference: I have some new tools at my disposal. The befuddlement gas proves especially useful against the highly aggressive mad monks.

1. I run east over the turf tier in the northeastern quadrant and fire an access hole to a stack of gold bars. Winding west through a series of pumice bowers, I trap a mad monk in a pedestal and hop over his head. I then zigzag through a switchback in the lower central region, carving access holes twice, until I swiftly trap a second mad monk in a pumice pit. With him stuck in the pit, I nab the mad monk snare and install it at the foot of the central long ladder.
2. A jagged and irregular cave with a sloping floor fills the southwestern quadrant. I vacuum the interior, then wait in the hideout for the two monk guards to clump on a step ladder just west. I make for the central long ladder and find a magic button about two lengths up. When the monks return to their former clump position, I dart up the long ladder to the roof of a double-decker boxed enclosure, where I rid the place of small bombs and gold accouterments.
3. The two monks gather outside the windowless enclosure on the long ladder. I get tired of having them around, so I detonate a small bomb and launch one of them into the stratosphere. The other falls into the vacated turf wall, and I hop over his head. Wending through the ladders and turf columns in the northwestern quadrant, I find a gold cache and a mad monk snare that looks like it might come in handy for the sentry stationed downstairs.
4. I set the snare and watch him wing upward. Down the corridor, I find another pumice bower that contains a treasure chest. I set off a small bomb, stash the chest, and then squirt the two monks with befuddlement gas at the entrance. With all the gold in hand, I cross over to the golden key. These two monks are extremely persistent, not like their dull-witted brethren in other caverns. I have no choice but to blow them up again, knowing that the effects will last for only a few seconds, just like in the old Road Runner cartoons.
5. The blast frees this lode runner to ignite the fuse of a small bomb, which triggers a chain reaction. The way now cleared, I vault forward into the electric blue.



LEVEL 104

LEVEL 104

What do a backwards “6,” “J,” and “5” have in common? Form. Specifically, a turned-around “6,” “J,” and “5” don’t differ very much in form, and the fact that they exist at all reveals either the presence of satanic forces or functional illiteracy—actually, innumeracy, to be more precise. Now maybe this particular character combination has some arcane significance known only to the denizens of the Evil Empire. If so, I can’t see it. But subliminal enhancement or not, I came here for the golden lucre.

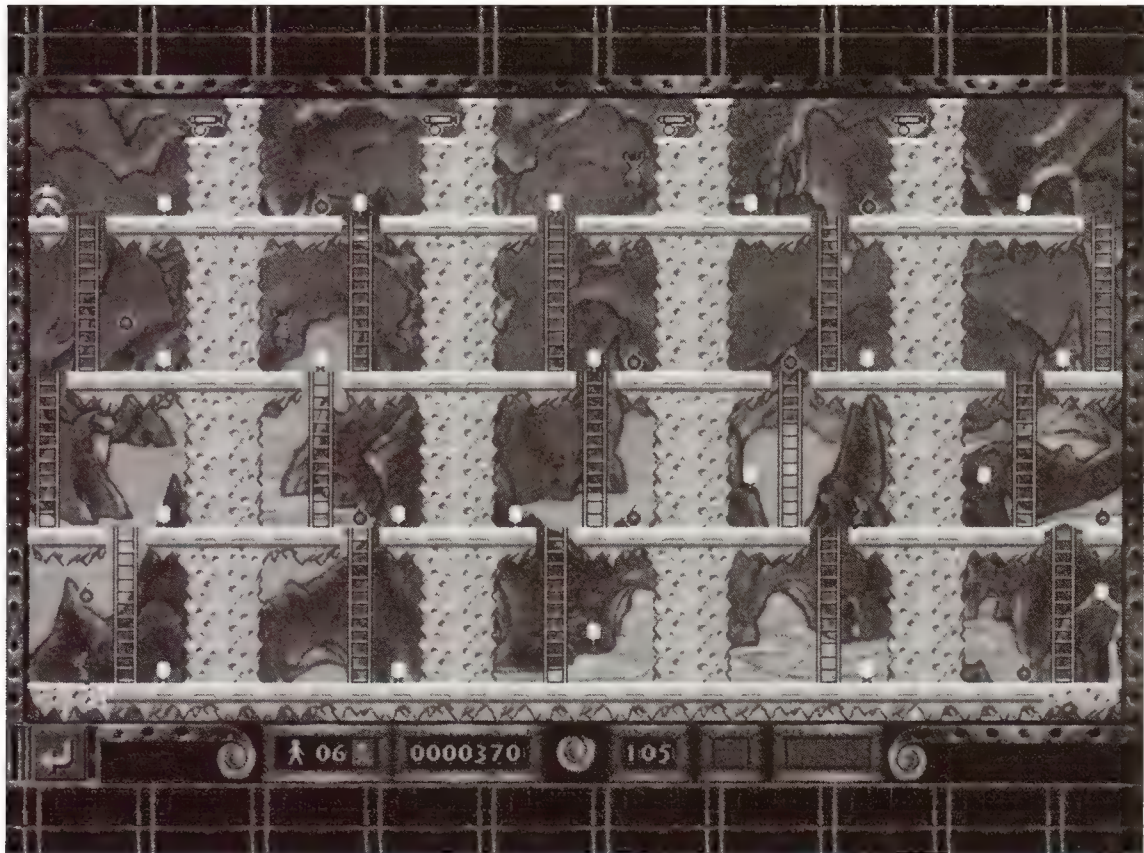
1. I begin on the hook of the “J.” I grab the small bomb at hand and cut a turf pit for a malicious mad monk. Hopping over his head to a ledge up above, I pocket the red key and sail down to the cavern floor. The monks flood from all directions; I retreat into the hideout and wait until they huddle under the bottom overhang.

2. I pop out of the alcove and set down the red key in a very strategic place: right beneath the trap-door turf of the backwards “6.” At the end of my raid, I’ll come back to this precise spot. I then speed up a long ladder and level a pumice retaining wall on the top of the “J” so that I can take it with me to the roof of the “5.” I prepare the snare, lure a monk into it, then grab the jackhammer and spike through a protrusion to the middle ledge of the “5.”
3. Unfortunately, I can’t get all of the treasure off the middle ledge because of some nagging trap-door turf. I land clasping a jungle beam. Monks join me for the arm-stretch. When I drop, they fall into the orange sludge, and I make my way back up to seize the orphaned gold. With a significant distance between me and them, I traverse the roof beam west to the top of the “J” and begin hammering through the bony protrusion on the west side. When I reach the bottom of it, I pluck suspended gold coins from the air like lollipops from a candy store.
4. The race to the finish is clearly in my favor. I ascend to the top of the backwards “6” and collect gold items where they lie. I have to watch for the trap-door turf. Instead of sweeping east inside the eye, I first sweep west, then east. Dropping through the illusory shaft, I land on the key at roughly the same moment as the chimes jingle overhead. I scale the western long ladder to the red vault door and leap into the cybernetic ectoplasm.

LEVEL 105

Back to Hollywood Squares again. This time, four canisters of befuddlement gas sit on four unreachable ledges. If only I had packed a painter’s ladder with me. As it turns out, however, I maneuver around the monks by using my laser blaster, small bombs, and the old martial art of ladder positioning.

1. A mad monk occupies the first column with me. First, I need to get him out of the way. I lure him up to a high painter’s ladder, then side-step and drop down to the head of the next ladder, where I continue



LEVEL 105

to slide until I reach the soft turf of the only pumice I'll find on the cavern floor. I blast a pumice pit. When the monk steps in, I step on top of him and grind him into the pit with my weight until the turf crushes him.

2. The former monk occupant reincarnates inside the fourth column. I finish sweeping up all the gold coins in the first column, then blast an entryway into the second column. The monk comes toward me in the southwest corner and falls into the trap I prepared for him. He coughs up a gold coin. I take it and run through the aperture. By the time he crawls out, the partition has already grown back. I clean out all the gold coins in the second column, then blast an opening at the base of the third column. I draw the monk through the opening by just standing at the base of the ladder.

3. The monk follows me up a short way, and then I leap off to the side of the ladder and rush through the opening. Before he can follow me through the opening, I charge up the ladder in the third column. He mimics my movement, and the partition closes behind. There's only one problem: he takes a gold coin with him into the second column. Now what? There's no way to trap him on the other side to verify whether he carries one or not. For some time, I run up and down the ladders, he mimes my every move, until I finally shake the coin loose inside the bottom square. I then draw him up to the top of the column and, with the coin isolated, contemplate my next move.
4. In the second square from the top, I blast through the partition between the second and third columns. I lure the monk through the hole and hop over his head back into the second column. I rush down to the bottom square, with him in hot pursuit, and plant a small bomb at the base of the ladder adjacent to the partition. I want to get back into the third column and dispense with him in one fell swoop. The blast achieves both objectives, but as I go through he reincarnates overhead, inside the third column. Though I'm getting low on small bombs, I have no choice but to fry him again. This time, he gets assigned to the second column.
5. My relief is only temporary. I now face two monks who guard the fourth column, and they do not look very agreeable. I load up on small bombs and sweep up the gold in the column, then contemplate the inevitable with the patient skill of the martial arts warrior in meditation. The blast forces open the partition, and both monks come rushing through the open gates. I lead them up the ladder, then sidestep, drop, and run through the opening. One remains behind, the other follows me through. My heart thumping in my chest, I speed up the ladder and snuff him in a small bomb blast. In the two seconds intervening, I feel absolute relief. He reincarnates in the second column with the other mad monk. Now, I have only to vacate the fourth and fifth unguarded columns and lift myself into the red vaulted cyberspace.

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CONCLUSION

To be honest, I won't miss the infernal temperatures of the Inferno's Playground, but the raid has certainly multiplied my massive finances. Next, I'll enter upon the beautiful violet and cyan realm of the Shimmering Caverns, where I'll acquire mastery of a new tool: the pickaxe.



Every so often, I get massive migraines. I get one just as I enter the Day-Glo Shimmering Caverns. Perfect timing. Maybe I've been jumping through too many gray exit doors. The velvet violet crystal turf and the cyan pools make me wince. Everything is under a black light. It's like flower power to the millionth degree, the Velvet Underground in raucous detail. What I would give for a little sunshine.

There's no cure for migraines. You don't just pop a few Tylenol and wait for them to go away. Migraines soar off the pain gauge. If you want to know what it's like, grab your upper lip and pull it back over your scalp. Then ask someone with a definite mean streak, such as a mad monk, to drive a pickaxe through the back of your skull. Ask him to widen the hole to turf-pit dimensions. Then your sadistic accomplice will need about two pints of kerosene. Gasoline and other flammable liquids work just as well. Fill the brain cavity to the brim. Light a match. Poof! That's a migraine.

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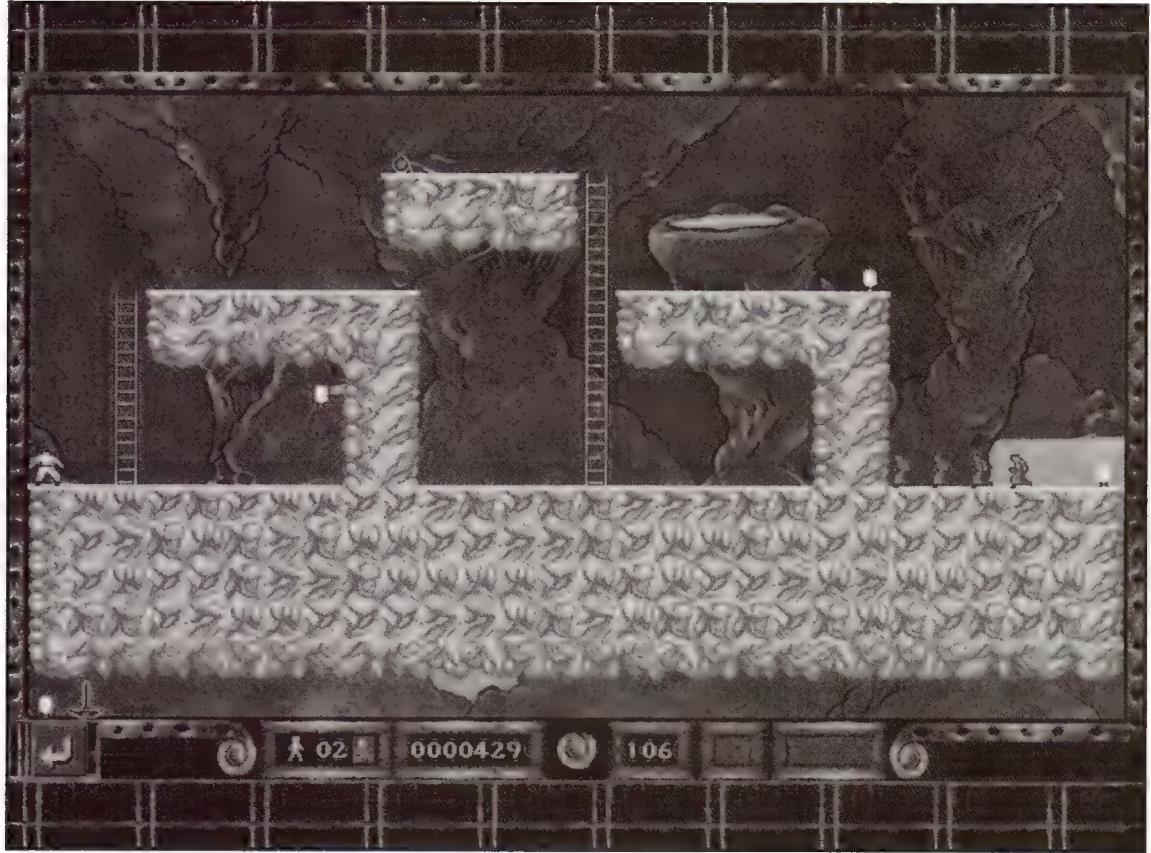
The Shimmering Caverns remind me of the inside of an alien brain with a migraine. I've never seen one before, but this is what I imagine it to look like. Getting a sudden urge to share my pain with others, I become expert with pickaxes and inflict the enemy brain with migraine attacks. Every time I wield the blade at the brain turf, I imagine a stabbing pain shooting through the central nervous system of the Evil Empire.

Pickaxes have no unique properties. They cause some dirt to pile up on the ground, stopping a phalanx of monks dead in their tracks for a few seconds. Or even just one monk. They work great on bedrock. On turf, I prefer the laser blaster or some other tool, such as a snare or befuddlement gas. At one point, however, I use a pickaxe in combination with my laser blaster: after I cut a turf pit, I pile dirt over the monk to hold him down. Pickaxes require sufficient time to use, however. It takes at least as much time to drop a load of brain turf as it does to prepare a snare, but there are plenty of situations in which a pickaxe is indispensable. I just wish it could make my migraine go away.

LEVEL 106

The first cavern throbs with purple. Prince must have designed this place with purple rain. What I need is a giant neutron bomb to take out the four monks on the other side, but since I have only my laser blaster and a measly small bomb, I have to use a little more creativity.

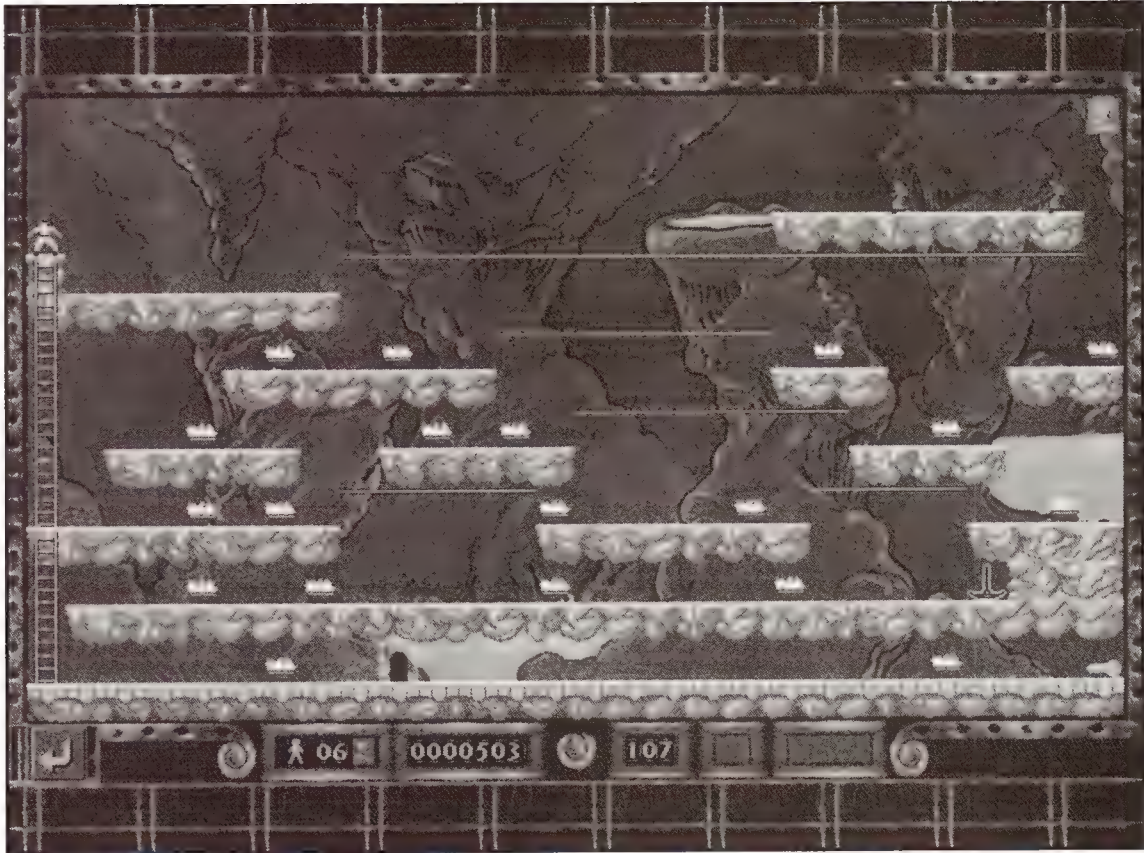
1. A gold coin holds fast like a button under the western diving ledge. I remove it by dropping through a descending series of two. The middle diving ledge, the highest in the trio, contains a small bomb, which I use to blast through the brain barrier that holds the four monks in their corral.
2. The blast leaves a nice migraine hole in the cerebral cortex layer of the cavern. I embellish it with a blast from my pistol, then clamber up the ladder and over the eastern diving ledge. By the time the brain tissue grows back, I'm safe in the corral.

**LEVEL 106**

3. A descending series of five blasts leads me to the cavern floor. In the eastern end, I find a pickaxe that is utterly useless now that the monks are above me. Still, it's a nice Stanley model, pre-Empire. I leave it where it is and take the gold coin next to it. The gray-matter exit door emerges in the southeastern corner, and I dive gingerly into the swirling vortex.

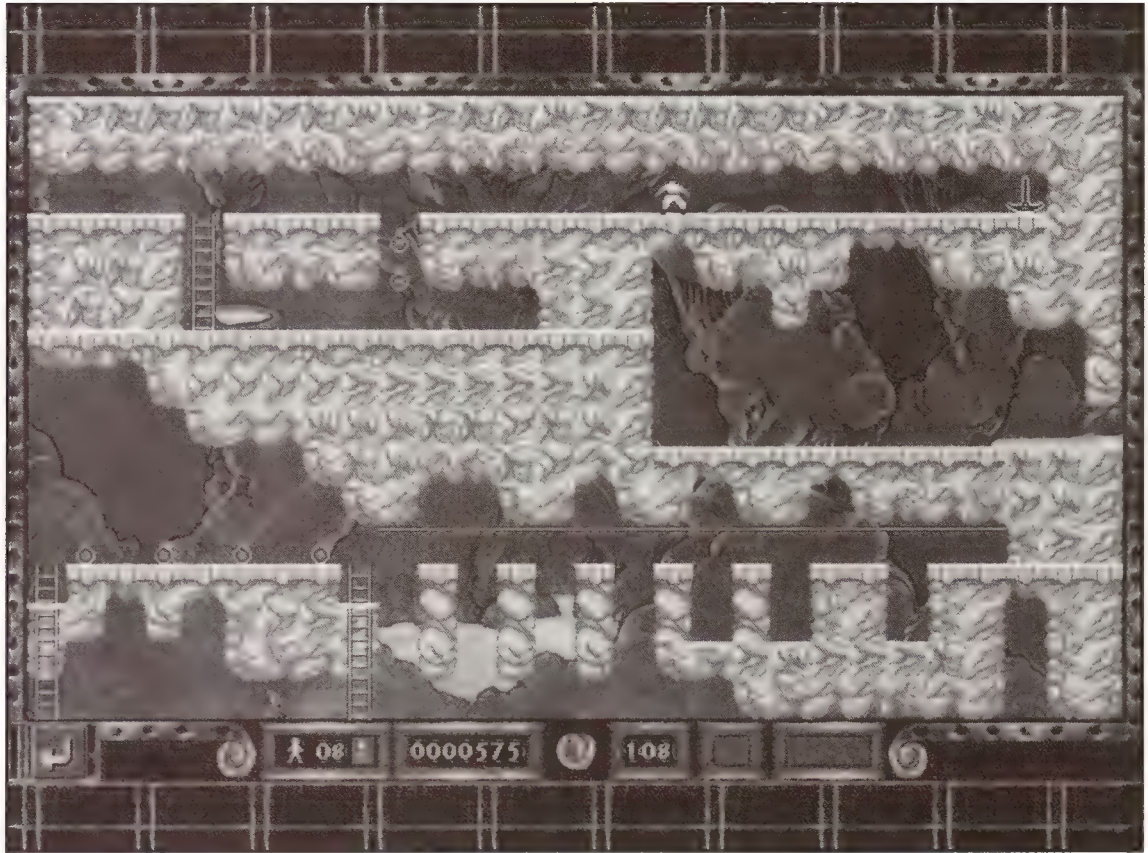
LEVEL 107

Remember *Fantastic Voyage*? A small group of scientists climb inside a submarine the size of a red corpuscle and navigate through a human body to the brain, where they attempt to dislodge a bullet. The Shimmering Caverns remind me of that brain as I stand atop the western long ladder. But migraine or not, I have to get to work before the mad monks get to me.



LEVEL 107

1. I have to get the key first. It's in the opposite corner. I slide down the ladder and bolt for the southeast corner, take the key, and double back to the hideout.
2. Inside, I wait for the monks to climb to the top of the tall ladder, then leap out and begin cleaning up the bottom layer of brain tissue. There is no need to grab the pickaxe. Instead, I blast a migraine trench and hop overhead. I'll cut many more migraines before I leave this place in approximately the same location.
3. I next make a large loop of the area. From the top of the western long ladder, I traverse east along the monkey beam to the western flank, where I drop down to the second gold layer. I have to be very careful of some trap-door turf to the east of where I land. I then sweep the gold off the ledges going west.
4. I make a tighter loop the second time, trying to cover as many ledges as I can. This time, I trap the monks on a higher brain level. I don't think the experience improves their intelligence any.

**LEVEL 108**

5. The third loop is my last one. The gold falls easily into my sack, but I have to outmaneuver the monks a little. The brain blaster helps me with that. Key in hand, I swing to the almighty vault door in the northeastern corner and dive into the embryonic layer.

LEVEL 108

We are thick into the cerebral cortex layer now. This time I find a use for the brainpick as I spread cancerous lesions throughout the purple realm.

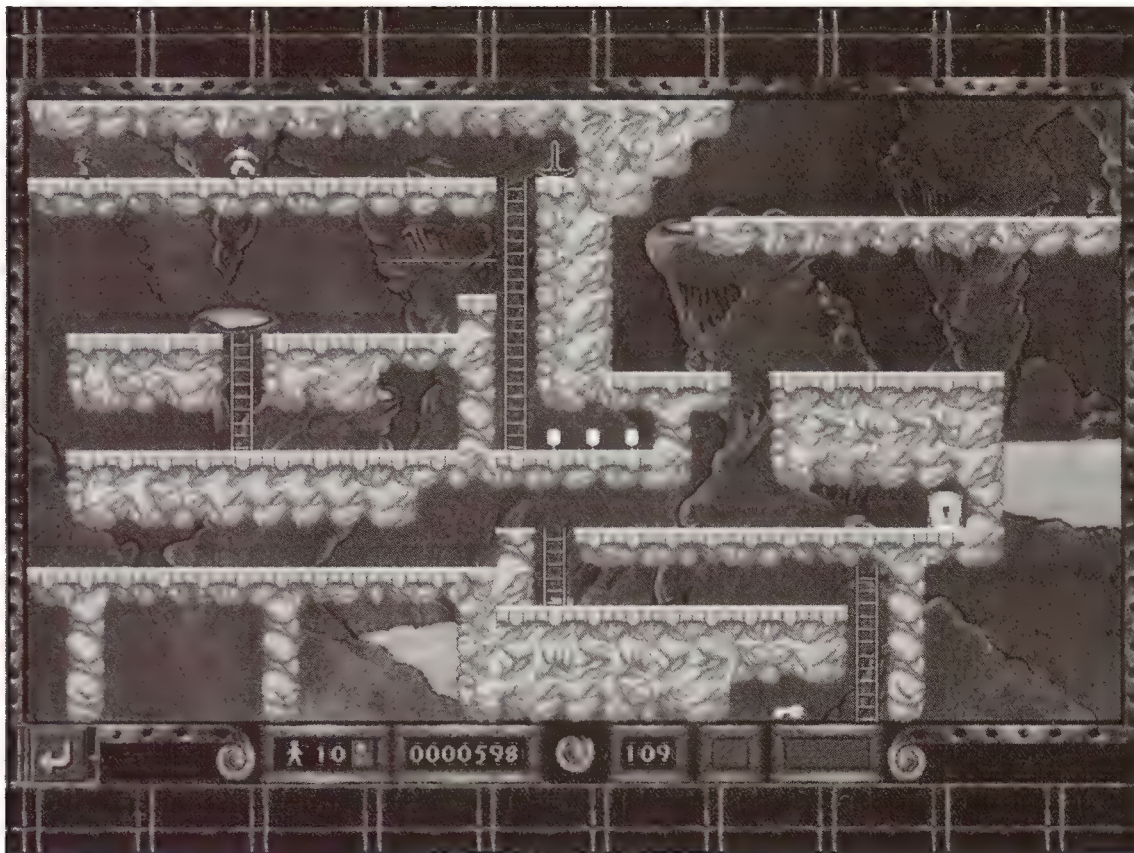
1. After taking the pickaxe from its little tool shed in the corner, I plunge down to the next ledge. One swing from the pick, and I have enough time to plant one of two small bombs against the brain barricade. I run back and drop another dirt pile, much to the chagrin of my red corpuscular foe.

2. The second small bomb detonates. I have enough time to run through the stroke tunnel to the chamber on the other side. On my way down to the beanpole that runs through the middle of the cavern, I find gold buried in brain turf. Four coins, to be exact.
3. The fourth coin touches off the gray-matter exit door in the southeastern corner. I do the monkey-beam polka with the monk sentry, fly down, and then run underneath him to the painter's ladder that leads up to an embankment.
4. I lure him up to the bedrock ledge, then charge underneath, waiting for him to come after me down the western painter's ladder. Positioning myself on the other side, I swing the pickaxe at the bottom of the first pylon.
5. Running this way and that, first to drop dirt, then to splatter brain turf, I work my way east while keeping the monk at bay. The last pick pile is a little tricky: I have to make sure that I don't step in the middle of recovering brain tissue as it reforms. But in the end, I kick up my heels and dive through the cybernetic splash.

LEVEL 109

I stand in a stuffy tunnel, the lurid purple prodding my migraine. The mad monk coming from the western side isn't helping my problems any, either. How do I spell relief? P-I-C-K-A-X-E.

1. Grabbing the axe, I dislodge some excess brain tissue and pile it thick and heavy. I dash down the painter's ladder that leads into an enclosure shaped like a lowercase "b." I gather up the gold coins and backtrack up the ladder. Before the pile disintegrates, I traverse the monkey beam west.
2. Running down a switchback, I meet a mad monk who must have been employed by Brink's in a previous life. He guards the vault door and the key below it like a rabid animal. I lure him out from behind the brain retaining wall by standing on top of the step ladder. He follows me east.
3. He pursues me to the top of a brainloaf ledge. I jump down the backside and feel the moist wall of the western border rubbing against



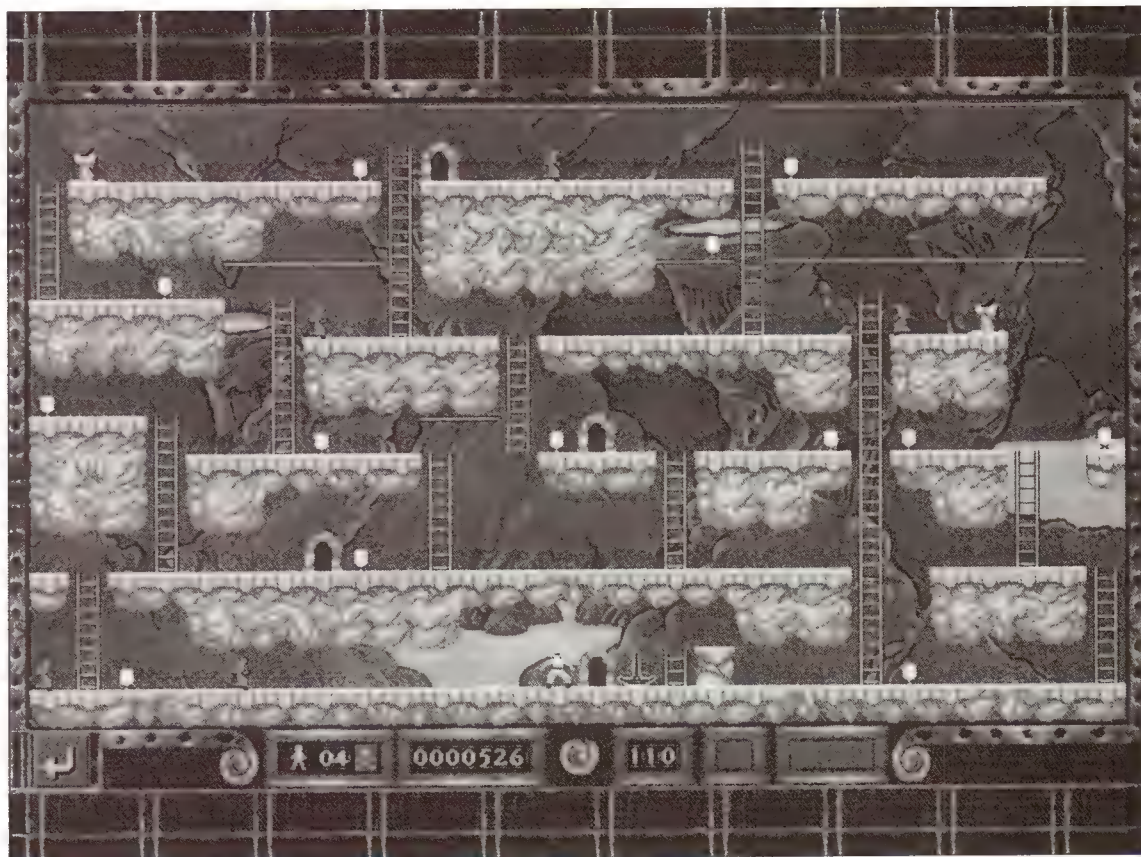
LEVEL 109

me. He starts down the ladder route, but when I reach the retaining wall, I find a magic button and he returns to the painter's ladder above. I then run east to get to the painter's ladder.

4. I find the golden key in a basement chamber and then huff it up to the vault door just before the monk catches me in the act of robbery. I debate whether to pick a pile from the ceiling, but the brain dirt disintegrates too quickly to make it worth the while. As it is, I make it safely to the golden think tank.

LEVEL 110

The hideouts in this shimmering cavern used to be blood vessels that were cauterized with an alien blow torch, according to my *Fodor's Guide to the Evil Empire*. Still, I see the muted blinking of old synapses that look almost like cuneiform. While waiting in the hideouts, I manage a little recuperation as my migraine alleviates somewhat.

**LEVEL 110**

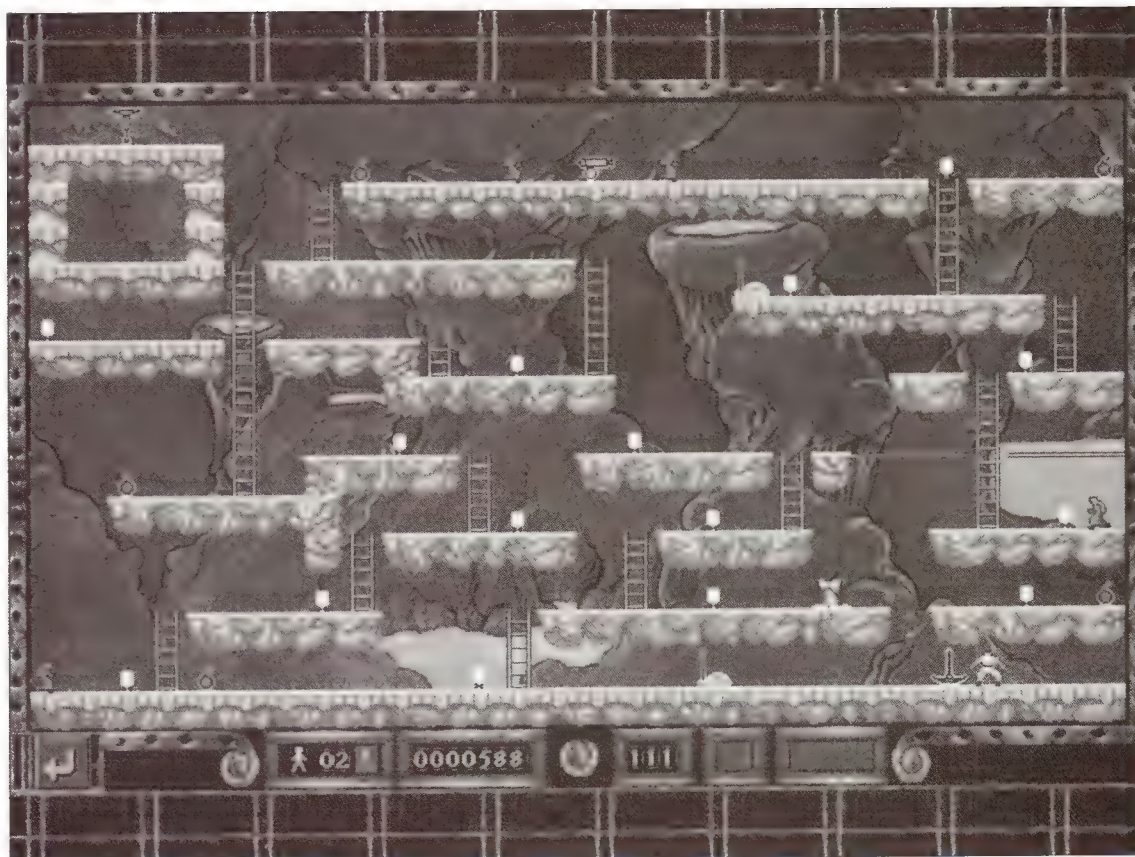
1. With two mad monks in the neighborhood, I have only enough time to seize the pickaxe and get back into the hideout. They pass right by me and clump on a step ladder to the east. Farther east in another chamber, three monks group on a painter's ladder. The way west is clear as I dash to the bedrock tier above and wind upward to the northeastern quadrant, taking gold coins along the way.
2. I find a hideout on the rooftop tier just as the migraine acts up again. Still, I manage to clean out the western half of the cavern in a single move. The monks congeal like red corpuscles on the eastern long ladder. Moving through the eastern half will be more of a challenge. I can snatch only one suspended gold coin before I have to slip into a mid-elevation hideout. I have to keep moving, though. I pop out of the alcove and make a dash for a lone coin.

-
3. Swinging east, I drop from the parallel beam down to a tiny ledge. The monks grow hysterical. I bring four of the five down to the southeastern corner to move them away from the last two coins; the fifth monk strays from the pack and presents a major headache.
 4. I make a mad run for it. The first coin falls easily into my grasp. Like the lead engine of a train, I loop the red cars up above the coin and, through quick dodging maneuvers that play havoc with my nervous system, I manage to grab the last coin. At the end of this trial, I swoop up to the parallel beam and land back on the small ledge. Two gray-matter exit doors appear in the northern corners.
 5. If I did it before, I suppose I can do it again. I follow the same route up to the northeastern exit. The second time, the monks get even more confused and collect near the cavern floor while I race up to the roof beam and vanish like the Lone Ranger into the blue-green sunset.

LEVEL 111

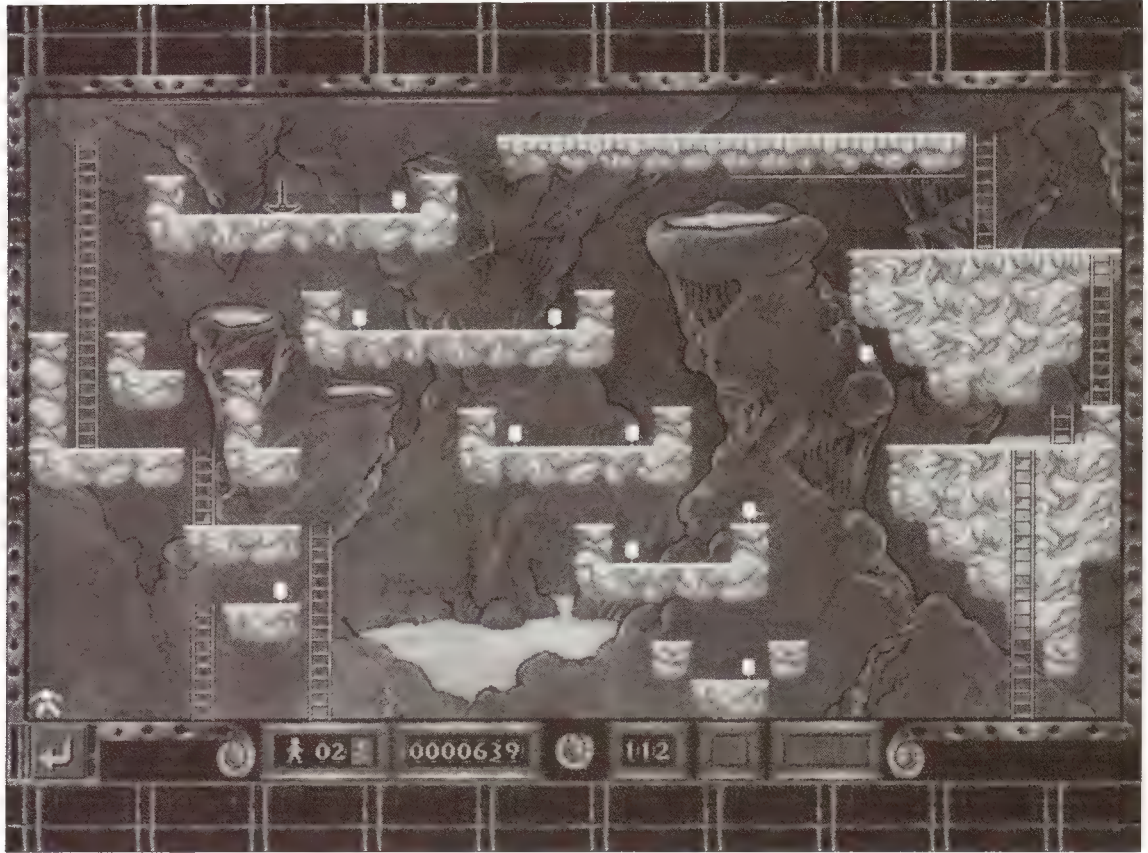
I have tools galore in this shimmering cavern. I'll use the pickaxe, mad monk snares, befuddlement gas, my laser blaster, and a jackhammer before I complete this tour. I feel like a one-man army up against insurmountable odds, a terminator out to extinguish mad monks.

1. I get off to a confusing start on the cavern floor. Which tool do I use first? By reflex, I grab the pickaxe and block the east monk. This gives me just enough time to install the snare for the west monk. West upends, East comes through the wall, and before you know it, we have a united Germany on our hands.
2. Quickly, I work through the central system of switchback ledges, being careful not to tussle with the monks. The most difficult challenge in the entire cavern happens now, as I lure them back to the cavern floor, then loop overhead again up the switchback.
3. In the northeastern quadrant, I find a mad monk snare. The lead monk walks right into that one. I check his pockets, then the surrounding area for any gold, and hike up to the rooftop tier, where I find a glorious canister of the funny green gas. One squirt renders the two remaining monks senseless.



LEVEL 111

4. It doesn't take much time to retrieve the bulk of the remaining coins. While the monks stagger around like clowns overhead, I burglarize the central cavern tiers. One gold coin lies stranded toward the east, but I snatch it before the monks can hover over me. I feel really confident with the befuddlement gas. No monk can stop me now.
5. The last gold coin stands beneath a huge purple iron enclosure in the northwestern quadrant. Two gray-matter exit doors appear inside. I suppose if a monk had reincarnated inside here, I still would have had a chance of making it to the unguarded one. Some angel has placed a jackhammer on the rooftop, so I spike through the roof and enter the shimmering domain without incident.



LEVEL 112

LEVEL 112

Navigating the eastern side of the cavern proves to be a challenge. A wayward monk guards his side so thoroughly that I wonder if I'll ever get over there in one piece. But through the practice of baiting, I manage to transfer him to the western side so that I can resume my duties on the eastern one.

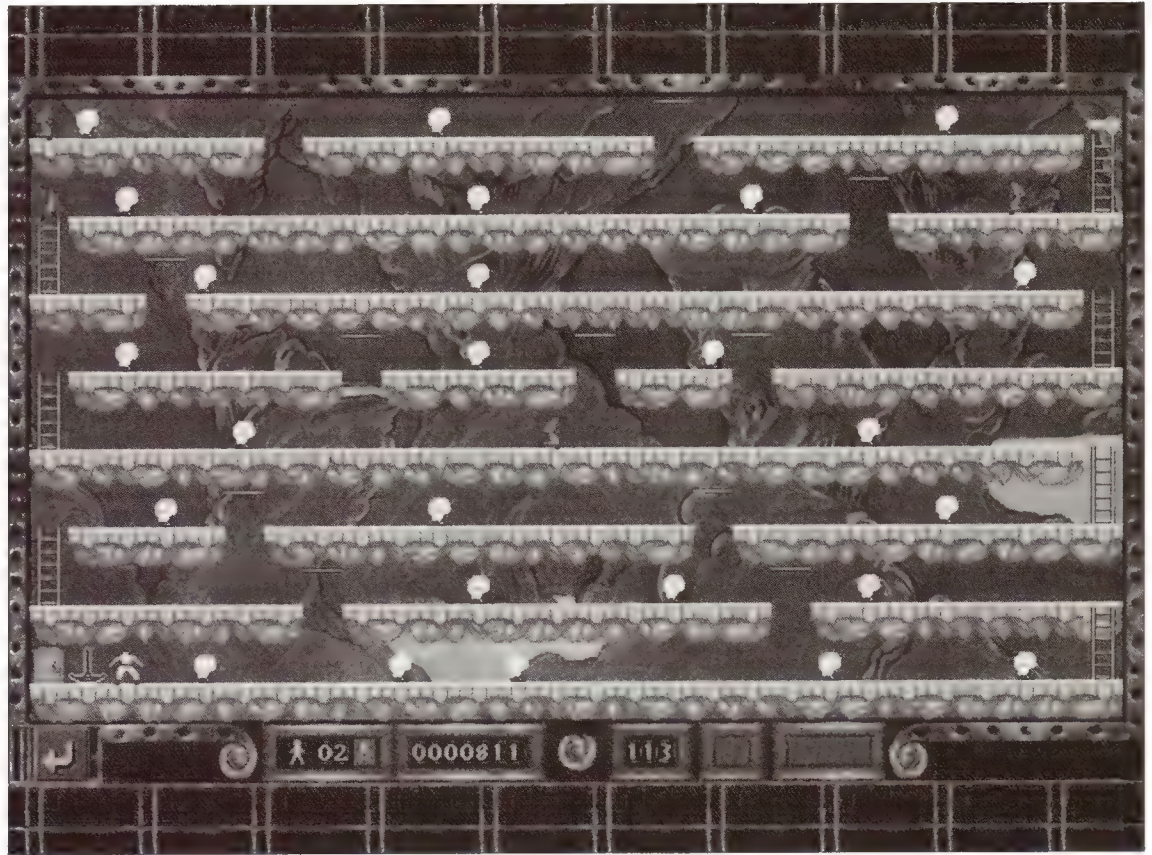
1. A series of nonaligned turf cradles disappear to a vanishing point beyond the cavern floor. The largest one sits on top. Rising up the switchback, I ascend a western painter's ladder and traverse a monkey bar to the first and largest cradle. I then fire an access hole to the cradle below me. I'll travel this route several times before crossing to the eastern side of the cavern.

2. When I go to grab the gold coin in the second cradle, I fall through trap-door turf. My heart jumps for an instant when I see there is no way to trap the monk on the cavern floor. But he foolishly leaps off to the other side, giving me enough space to travel up to the top of the cavern again. Hopeful that I won't repeat that exercise, I fire through the floor of the second cradle to access the third, smaller one.
3. There is more trap-door turf on the third cradle, but since I've been through this before, I don't fear an encounter with the mad monk on the cavern floor. I loop up a third time until I finish taking all the coins I can reach from this route. To get the others, I'll have to figure out a way to safely make it to the other side. I exit to the cavern floor by blasting a chunk of the small cradle away.
4. The western monk sentry hasn't presented much of a problem so far, but this time I want him out of the way. I blast a brain pit, then drop a load over his head to keep him there. I then climb up to the roof beam and wait for the eastern monk sentry to come. Just as my arms can't stand the burn anymore, the monk jumps over the ledge and joins his cohort near the western flank. I drop down to the bottom cradle and fire an exit hole that leads the way to the eastern gold frontier.
5. I have two coins left to retrieve. One sits on a pedestal edge of a cradle that is now within easy reach; I simply have to climb up to the eastern hand-over-hand bar and drop over it. The other coin stands adjacent to a bulbous brain ledge in suspended animation. I take it in the same manner. The gray-matter exit door appears conveniently in the southeast corner, where I'm careful not to bump my head.

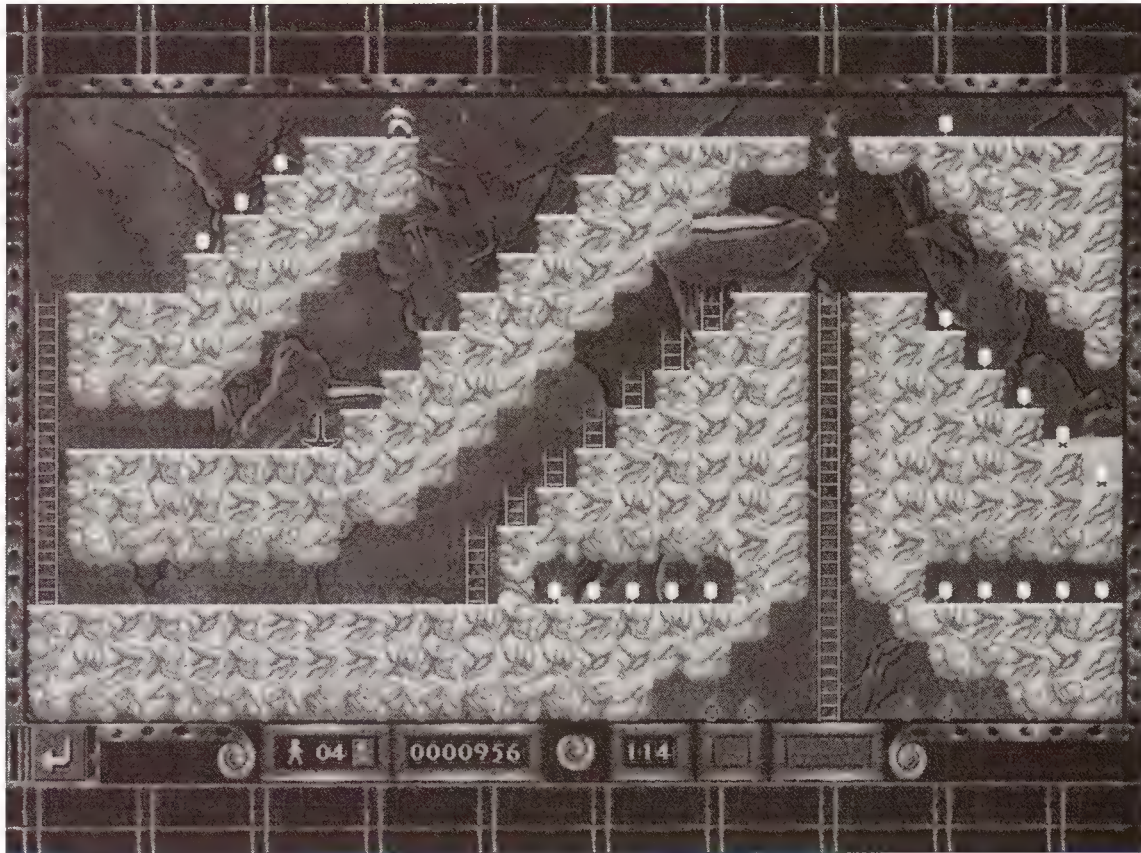
LEVEL 113

I'm not claustrophobic by nature. But just as I begin to feel a little relief from the migraine, I emerge in a tight-spaced switchback that rises all the way to the top of the cavern. Using the pickaxe, I successfully ward off an attack from a phalanx of monk rovers and stage a massive sting against the Empire's coffers.

1. I run east along the cavern floor and rise to the second tier. About mid-way across, I drop a pile to block the first monk to come toward me. Fearful that it might disintegrate too quickly, I wield the pickaxe a second time just adjacent to the first pile to refresh the barrier.

**LEVEL 113**

2. I just keep picking the roof and dropping loads until the last mad monk lines up behind. As soon as all four monks are present and accounted for, I lead them single file through a gap between ledges, then stop them cold on the cavern floor with another pile-barricade. I then bullet overhead.
3. All the gold from this cavern now sits in my rucksack. Three monks remain quite still, and only one comes after me. In the northeast corner, I replace my pickaxe with the key, then wait for the monk rover to come get me. It seems to take ages. When his body odor becomes too strong to bear, I drop through a gap to the ledge below.
4. The three monks don't move an inch, not even as I get close to them. Except for one tier where I have to run the full length to the painter's ladder on the eastern boundary, I mostly focus on dropping through western gaps until I come to the green vault door. The key works in the lock, and I plunge into the shimmering blue light.



LEVEL 114

LEVEL 114

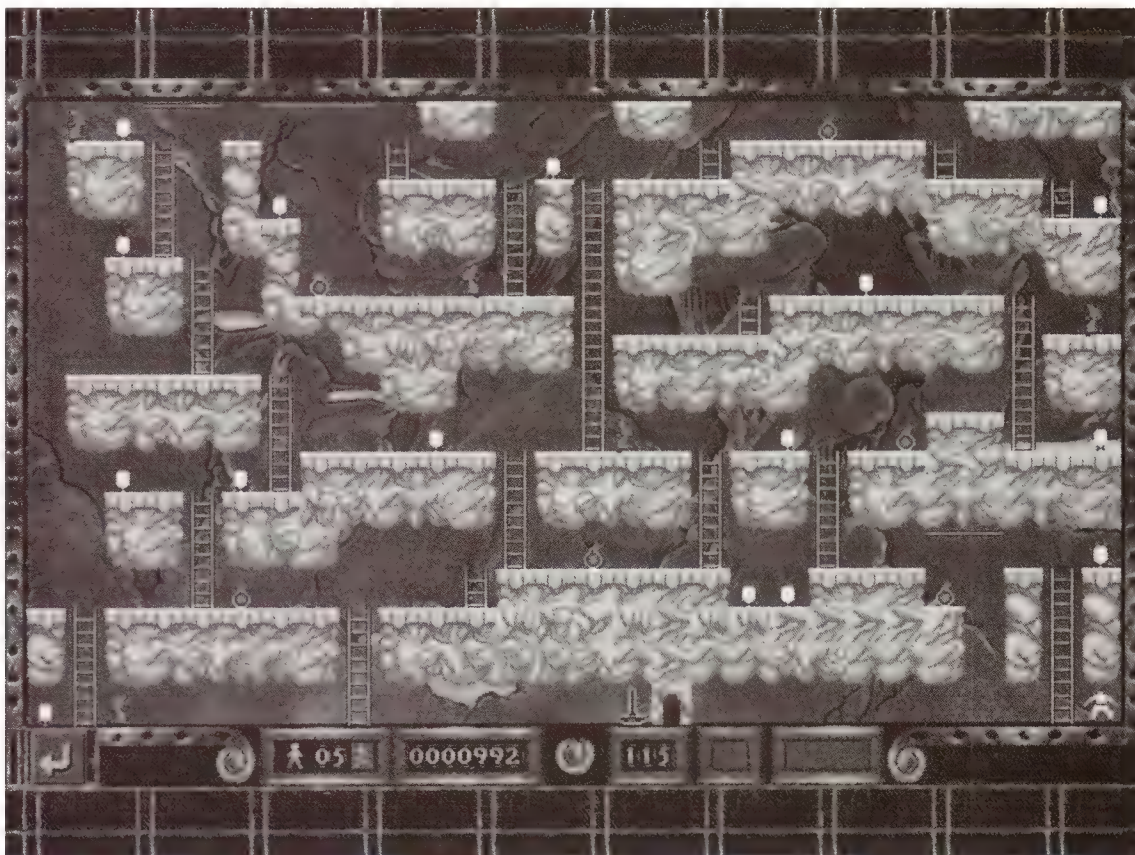
Here I come upon the Aztec steps of the Shimmering Caverns. A pyramid occupies the eastern side of the cavern. Serrated ledges run diagonally parallel to the west, rising to their pinnacle at the cavern roof. One coin sits on an unreachable ledge, so I require the thieving assistance of a willing monk accomplice to bring it my way.

1. First things first: I'll need the pickaxe later, so I add it to my one-item-limit tool chest. I then trap the three monks in a trench on the ledge below. The brain tissue grows back very quickly and crushes the monks. One comes down through the eastern gap, bringing the golden coin with him. I reward him by preparing a trap on top of the pyramid. Good boy.

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2. I find that I can keep him in the trench by positioning myself near the bottom of the long ladder that rises like a spine through the pyramid. It's very important that the monk not chase me to the cavern floor because there is simply no means to trap him down there other than the four small bombs, which I plan to save for a future emergency. He reincarnates over by the western side, so I work on the eastern flank of the pyramid, chewing through the brain tissue two turf squares at a time. Before I drop to the next level, I always take the gold coin first. Finally, I enter the wide, shallow chamber.
 3. Before I can get to the last token in the chamber, I fall through trap-door turf—the bane of my existence—to the cavern floor. To get to the last coin, I carve a column two squares wide next to the spine ladder until I can blast entry. I then drop through the trap door again.
 4. I hook the two remaining small bombs on my belt and repeat the column carving on the western side, removing all but three gold coins from the shallow and wide chamber on that half of the pyramid. The three monks become a little feverish, so I stand at the top of the pyramid until they clump on the western painter's ladder. I want them to be as far away as possible for my next move.
 5. Step ladders dot the western edge of the pyramid. I plant a small bomb on the second rung from the bottom. The blast clears an opening wide enough for three Jake Perils to enter the chamber at once to take the three gold coins. I drop down to the cavern floor through the trap-door turf, then climb up the spine ladder to the top of the pyramid. The three monks gather and wait. Then I spring down to the ledge and hack at the underside of a brain ledge. While they cluster single file, I prepare a trench large enough for all three and dash up to the gray-matter exit door in the northwest corner.

LEVEL 115

It takes nearly all my energy to outfox the mad monks on the eastern side of this cavern. That's where I find the bulk of difficulties, and where they exert their most vigorous defense. But in addition to the pickaxe, the abundance of small bombs helps me wage a successful brain drain.

**LEVEL 115**

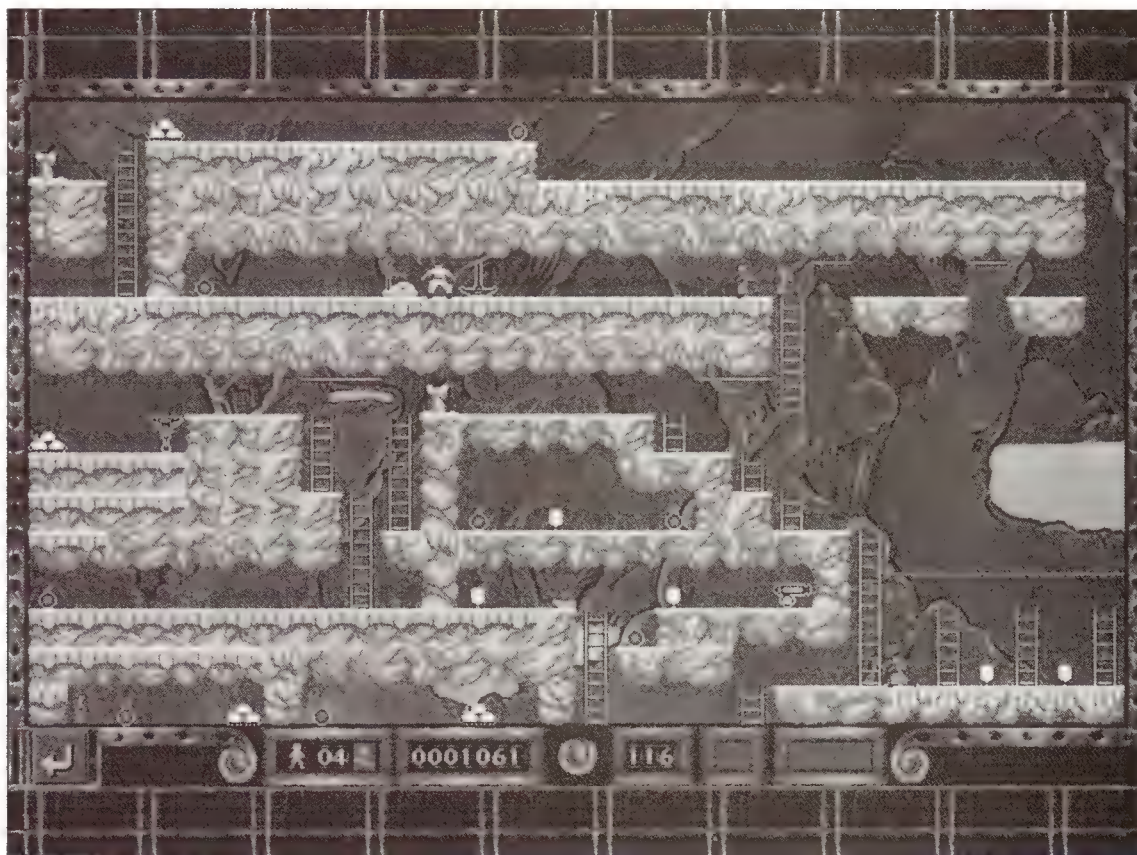
1. There is little I can do initially. I climb a painter's ladder in the southeast corner and cross west via a monkey beam, dropping through trap-door turf to the cavern floor. There, I find a pickaxe and retreat quietly into a hideout. The mad monks take a while to settle out of their frenzy, but when they concentrate in the southeastern quadrant, I gather four of them on the cavern floor, then surprise them with a turf pile.
2. Before I can begin my fund drive, I chip away three times at the brain turf, keeping those four safely behind the pile. I work my way up to the northeastern quadrant, where a very stubborn monk guard almost refuses to yield ground. But eventually I draw him over a turf retaining wall, since that's the only way I can get to the gold lucre behind him.

3. I want to complete my sweep of the eastern half before resuming my fund drive on the western half. It takes a lot of effort. Continuing where I left off, I lose the monk guard on a rooftop tier, drop through trap-door turf, and loop around a ledge to get to the stranded gold coin. Another gold coin still hangs suspended near the cavern floor, but first I want to draw the mad monks away from the central long ladder. They arc over a ledge toward me, but I slip down like a serpent's tongue to the gold coin down below.
4. My job now becomes much easier. All five monks cluster on an eastern painter's ladder while I run about unhindered in the northwest corner. A small bomb comes in handy when I need to blast through to the outer wall. I could easily hike over the partition, but I need to get out some hostilities. Plundering the gold off those shelves requires no special skill, and the gray-matter exit door chimes into being in the northwestern corner.

LEVEL 116

Had I encountered this cavern earlier in my travels, I doubt I would have gotten through it successfully. In fact, I might still be there now, rotting in some corner. But because of the plentiful tools at hand, the task of removing the monks and the gold becomes far simpler. I use nearly all of them at different stages.

1. The sequence of use is very important in the beginning. Two monks approach from the east on a confined bedrock ridge. First, I wield the pickaxe at the ceiling and detain the monks behind the barrier. Next, I install the mad monk snare, careful to step away from it so that I don't catch my foot in the loop. And last, I light the fuse of the small bomb at the foot of the purple barrier. The blast allows me to get through, but it causes a thunderous commotion on the roof as it sets off a chain reaction. I nearly get killed when a small bomb lying on the rooftop tier detonates.
2. I run to the end of the rooftop ridge and plummet footfirst into a pigpen in the southeast corner. Though small, it contains enough slime to cover a ridge and makes for slow going. Two mad monks come

**LEVEL 116**

down to splash in the muck. I lure them until they stand in between the painter's ladders, then traverse overhead. They're too far away from the painter's ladders to grab me.

3. I blast a brain pit to slow down the lead mad monk as I climb to the roof of a double-decker enclosure that contains small bombs. Here, I'll also find befuddlement gas as I blast down through the floors of the enclosures. The other two monks remain a safe distance away in the southeastern quadrant, though they peer at me anxiously through the turf partitions.
4. Two shallow and wide enclosures of equal length look like they were formed under the legs of a giant purple caterpillar. I carve a vertical shaft to get past the first foot. While a small bomb fuse hisses against the second foot, I rush back to squirt befuddlement gas at the two monks, who have found their way down. The blast incinerates the monk who occupies the western interior, and I'm free to

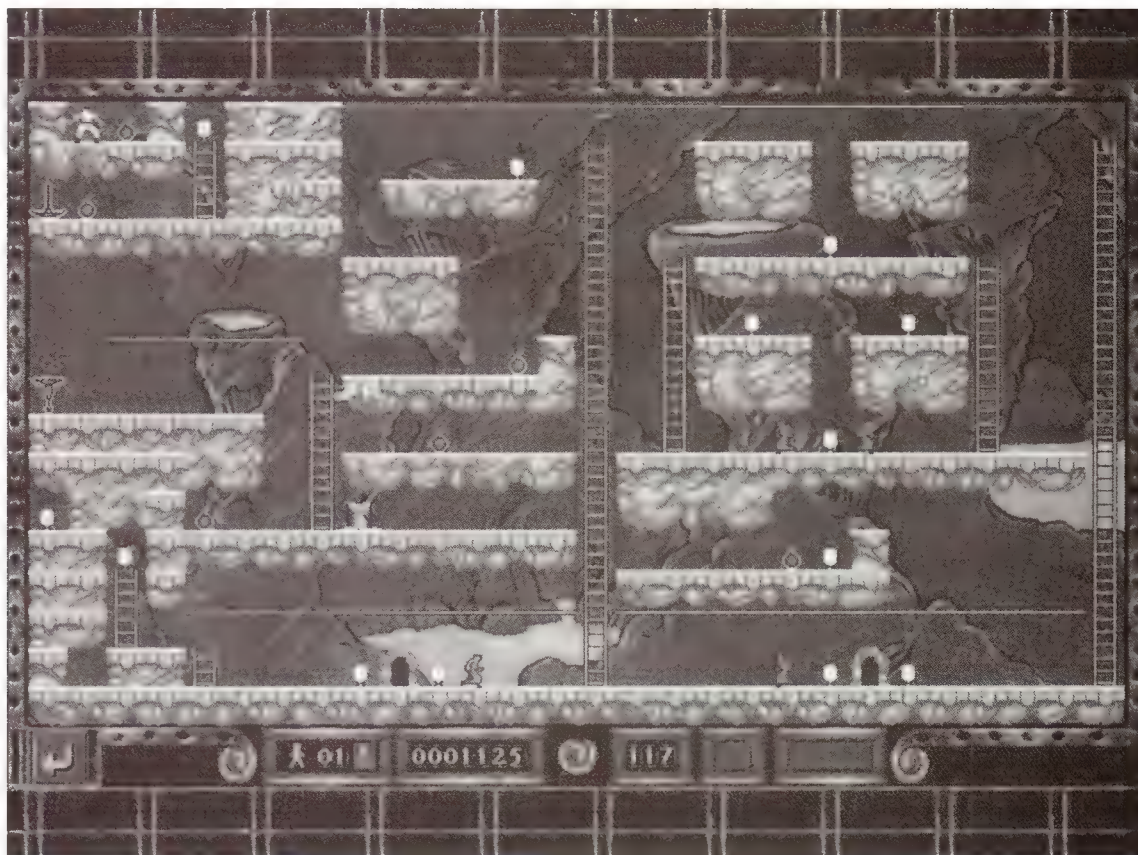
rob it of gold. By the time the other monks come out of their drug-induced funk, the first foot has grown back. I wait for the third dearly departed monk to join his sanctimonious brothers on the other side.

5. The force of the blast takes out the first mad monk but leaves the other two untouched. I stall them with a fresh minty squirt of befuddlement gas, then climb several ladders to blast through a turf barrier. On a higher ridge to the west, a stack of gold ingots stands unclaimed, the last bit of gold treasure in the cavern. I could trade my canister for the jackhammer to carve through the bedrock, but I don't want to give that up yet. Instead, I level the retaining wall and double back before it regenerates. Meanwhile, the gray-matter exit door materializes in the northeastern corner. I spray a monk on the a turf ledge and then depart with sweet sorrow through a threshold the color of Juliet's eyes.

LEVEL 117

Psychotic monks on the rampage. Sounds like a cover line for *Newsweek*, but in fact it describes the four psycho-brothers in this shimmering cavern. A bedrock vault chamber in the southwestern corner reminds me of Fort Knox, but because I have experience with the latter establishment, a plan of attack comes rather easily to me.

1. First, I need to break out of my little crow's nest in the northwestern corner. I achieve that easily enough with a combination of laser and small-bomb firepower. The blast from the latter touches off a chain reaction that scares off the monks who come to investigate. When the smoke clears, I run through the blast tunnel and sail down to a ledge below.
2. These monks have been trained for light combat. I can tell by the aggressiveness in their movements. But because I move quickly down the western flank, I don't run into any major hang-ups. A quick hack at some brain turf stops one monk on a pipe ledge while I traverse a monkey beam to the roof of Fort Knox. I put down my pickaxe and

**LEVEL 117**

pick up the jackhammer. The sharp steel blade carves through the bedrock column effortlessly. Just before reaching the bottom, I pick up a small bomb, then duck into the alcove to retrieve the gold coin. The monks swarm down in a frenzy near the cavern floor, but I have enough time to retreat into a hideout. I wait there until they collect near the shell-shocked alcove, just under the floor beam.

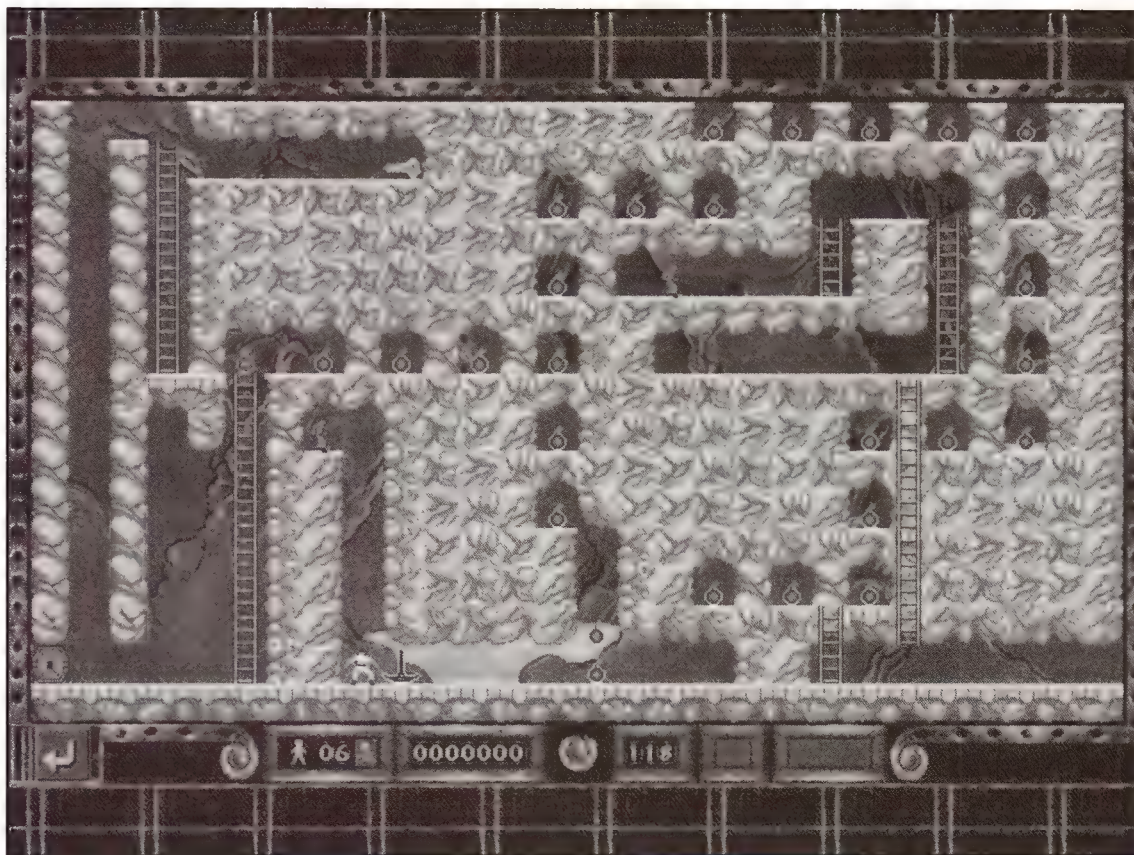
3. I then make a dash for the central long ladder. I'll make this trip several times in the course of my raid, and never once do the monks try to catch me short. They always access the floor beam from either end, never from the middle. That's the main reason, other than my superior speed, that I move up so quickly to the roof of Fort Knox again, where I carve a shorter but by no means less important column adjacent to the first one.

-
4. Now that the vault has been prepared for break-in, I pursue the treasure on the eastern flank. With some quick dodging, I cross the floor beam to the eastern long ladder and strafe some brain ledges in the northeast quadrant. In a short time, I suck up the entire supply of gold on this side of the cavern. It remains for me only to rob the gold near the western boundary, and to do so without deadly intervention.
 5. I find a magic button on the eastern long ladder and wait for the monks to clump on a painter's ladder. Then I jump down to the ledge and place a small bomb in their midst. The explosion serves two purposes: it removes them from the vicinity, and it also confirms that they aren't hiding any treasure on them. They reemerge through a fixed portal overhead, letting me loop around to a gold coin on an upper ledge in the northwest quadrant. Spreading a good distance between me and them, I hop down to Fort Knox and grab the last coin by blasting through the turf. This action invokes the gray-matter exit door deep in the corner, and I drill down to freedom.

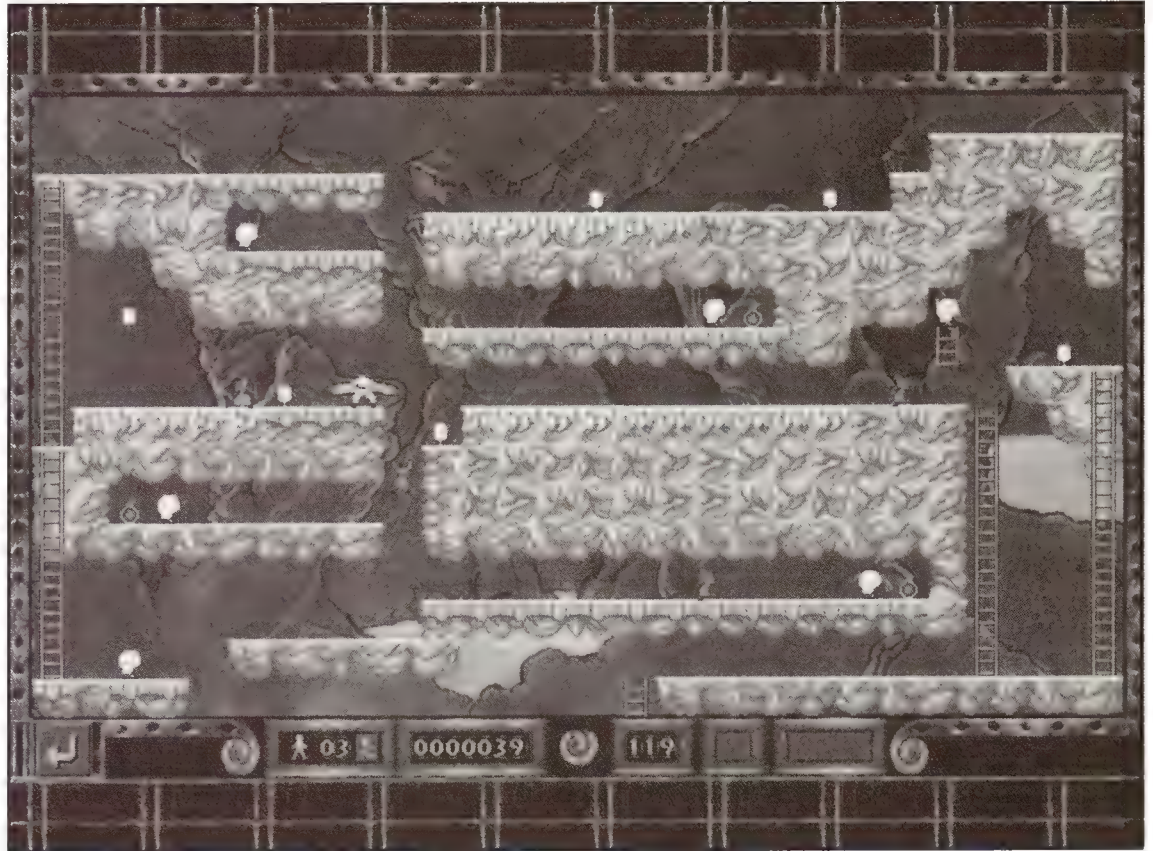
LEVEL 118

Welcome to the House of Horrors. Twenty-eight small bombs fill separate alcoves. The fireworks look like a cross between Halloween and the Fourth of July. While explosions rage overhead, getting rid of Lurch on the cavern floor takes all my creativity. With a limited amount of firepower at my disposal, I rely heavily on luck. But I always know how to cash in a favor with Lady Luck when I need one.

1. While Lurch parachutes down, I heave at the low ceiling and stall him behind a pile of dead brain tissue. This brings me enough time to set off the first blast. While the bomb chain rumbles overhead, I dart over to a small overhang. A patch of bedrock topside shields me from a blast directly overhead.
2. When the dirt pile disintegrates, Lurch locks eyes with me and charges like a bull. Ever the matador, I sweep up to the ledge above. With more brawn than brains, he gets stuck in a vast brain pit and liquidates in the turf regrowth. He reincarnates on the eastern front. I inch upward as the bomb chain migrates east overhead. I

**LEVEL 118**

- wait inside a shallow, wide chamber just below the second monk. He doesn't even sense where I am and seems perfectly happy oscillating on the painter's ladder.
3. The bomb path forks at about the same level as where I stand: one threads down through a vertical shaft, the other east toward Lurch. I leap into the shaft with the last blast to get the untouched small bomb. Lurch brings it on the other side. He could reappear anywhere, but fate deposits him in a bombed-out alcove overhead. Bomb in hand, I burst through the partition and trek up the long ladder.
 4. Lurch doesn't come back for a sequel, leaving me to get the skeleton key and make it down to the vault door in the southwest corner. The loud noises don't help the migraine much, but the sparkling jukebox reminds me of the sweet smell of success—if you don't mind a little lingering cordite in the air.



LEVEL 119

LEVEL 119

I've hopped monks before, but I've never ridden them. This cavern feels more like a rodeo than anything else, or perhaps a ferry: the Shimmering Cavern of the monk ferry. I just have to be really careful that I don't capsize.

1. Permit me to get hopelessly tangled in mixed metaphors. The brain ledges are so thick that they remind me of sperm whales. One of them looks like he has tail flukes. Anyway, I ride Shamu to the bottom of the shaft and do a little country two-step, taking this monk ferry to the southwest crossing.
2. The western monk sentry comes down to investigate, but I have a brain pit waiting long before he arrives. I stamp on his head until he crushes in the regrowth, then scamper up the western long ladder waiting to hitch a ride. Just as he tips over the edge, I skip overhead to the top of Moby Brain One.

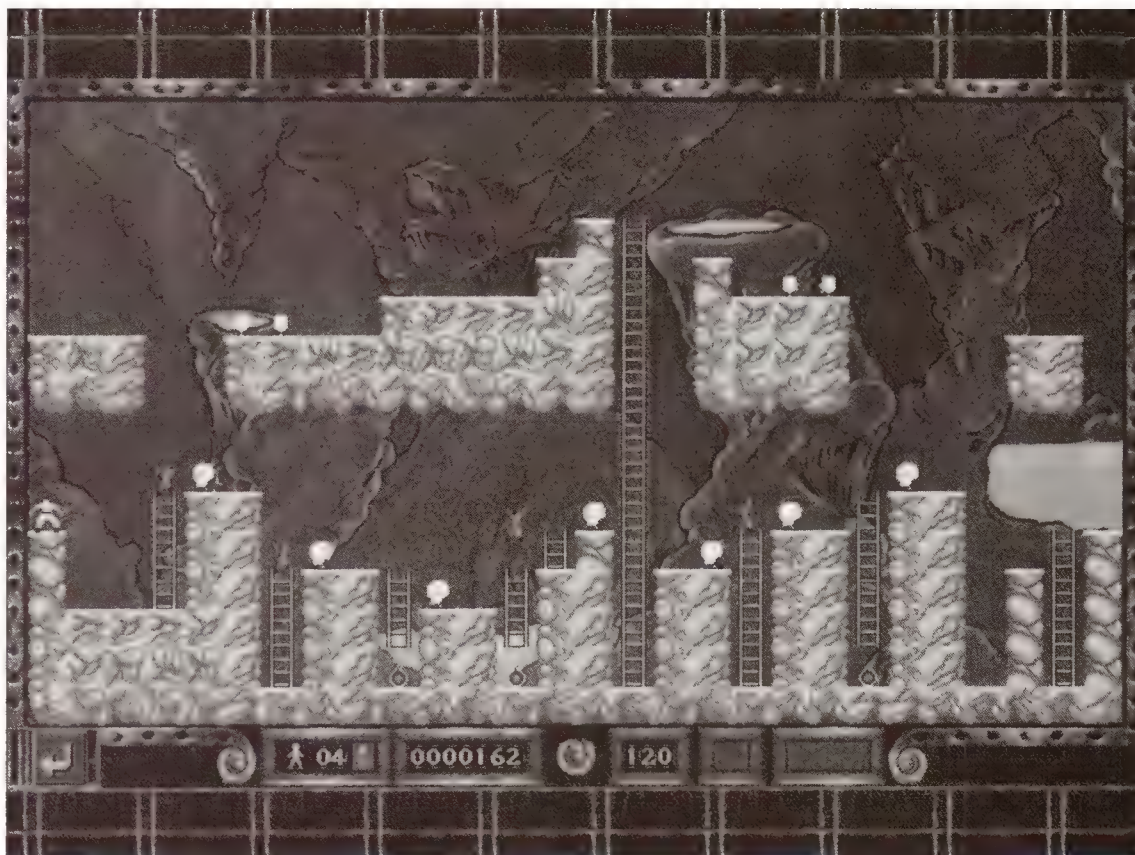
3. Carving a descending series of two, I drop into the mouth of Moby One and clean up the paltry spoils: just a small bomb and one piece of gold. Like Jonah, I jump out of the mouth and float down to the harelip of Moby Brain Two. I want to lure the four monks thick into the slime until one strays from the herd and I can trap him in a brain pit. With a fixed portal in the northeastern corner, the reincarnated monk could then offer me a lift to the other side when I need one. I pierce a hole through the harelip and drop down to the cavern floor.
4. Ideally, I would have preferred all four monks to stand on the head of Moby Two. But I have to trap a lone wolf on the bottom turf. I fire a second blast just to make sure he doesn't jump me from behind as I climb up the long ladder. Meanwhile, I manipulate the three stooges through ladder positioning. I find the magic button slightly above Moby Two's jawbone. That makes them tread west. When I move above it, they switch east. When they've traveled a safe distance, I speed up the ladder and start stripping away the eastern edge—the migraine zone—of Moby Two.
5. I stop short of the last bit of turf and climb inside the mouth. Once inside, I blast away the last chunk of brain turf. A monk strays into it, and with the column growing back overhead, he's unable to pursue me inside the mouth cavity.
6. Jake Peril, laser gun for hire and rough rider, saddles up and rides the red bronco to the western flank. I use my hands a lot for balance, just like those cowboys in the rodeo. Safe from any cow-monks, I start pillaging the western flank, beginning with Ralph the Right Whale in the northwestern corner. I start with a descending series of two to get into his mouth and steal his gold fillings.
7. So as not to get trapped, I cut another descending series of two to exit. A gold coin still hangs suspended under Ralph, so I drop through another descending two and drift over the spot. The coin falls effortlessly into the rucksack. To get inside Moby Brain Three, I unhook a small bomb and detonate it over the turf block right below the empty turf square. Too low, and the blast would have ignited the second bomb inside and blown out the floor. Instead, I walk right past his golden molars without falling down to the cavern floor.

8. From the lip of Moby Three, I gaze across the cavern at the four mad monks lined up on the inside eastern long ladder. I then drop down to the harelip, drawing them deep into the turf tar, then race underneath to the far eastern long ladder. It has a sweet spot, a magic button, in precisely the same location as on the inside ladder. The monks collect on the inside ladder. I inch upwards. At first, the lead monk oscillates on top of the ladder, but when I assume my starting stance at the top of the outside long ladder, the others push him into immobility. I now have my bridge.
9. I cross the footbridge—or, more aptly, the hood-bridge—to the suspended step ladder, which holds a golden skull. Once removed, I side-step to the west and, as quickly as the viscous slime will allow, cross west through the turf tar.
10. When I remove the last gold coin from the tip of Moby Two's snout, the heavenly chimes break forth, invoking the gray-matter exit door inside Ralph the Right Whale. I picked the right spot to be in; a step ladder bridges the two sides as I cross the gorge into Moby Three's maw. Seconds later, I jump into a tub full of blue caviar.

LEVEL 120

Unlike the previous cavern, this one, the final in the Shimmering series, requires more patience and luck than skill. I'm not a patient man. I'm more patient when money enters the bargain, but I don't like to wait. I like to work fast. This job, however, moves like a petrified forest! The objective: to wrest the two gold coins from the northeastern ledge, a feat achieved only by stamping monk-meat underfoot.

1. In such tight quarters, I stamp on a trapped monk until he gets pulverized in the turf compactor. I do this with all trapped monks. Then I'll wait to see where he reincarnates, just like watching the spinning wheels of a slot machine. I'm lucky the first round: the monk comes out at Jackpot Ledge and takes one of the coins with him. I'll get him to cough it up later. For now, I cut away the retaining wall and invite a mad monk into the slaughterhouse.

**LEVEL 120**

2. The second monk reincarnates over Jackpot Ledge but forgets to bring the coin down with him. This will happen many times. I guess the coin has a thick slathering of grease over it. One monk climbs up the central long ladder and sails over the western ridge to join me in my quarters, but he comes back over the column slammer. If a monk gets trapped in there, he's history until I release him. I scour the petrified forest of gold coins and skulls until I coax and then trap another monk just east of the long ladder.
3. That monk comes back over the western ridge and drops into my old stomping grounds. Though it's considerably risky to do so, I drop down through a cut-out portion of the western ridge and trap the monk on the retaining wall. He comes back over the column slammer. When I trap the last monk in a brain pit, he goes to the western pit. Rather than hassle with a maybe hit, I decide instead to dig under the brain turf for a small bomb and release the three trapped monks from eternal captivity.

-
4. The three monks thank me for releasing them from the column slammer. Two come out over Jackpot Ledge and take the last gold coin. Victory at last. A series of step ladders bridges me to the gray-matter exit door as I dive through the shimmering threshold.

CONCLUSION

With that, I toast my final farewell to the Velvet Underground. But as if a migraine weren't enough, in the next cavern I suffer from yet another physical handicap. Without the aid of my Xartanium pendant, I'll have to feel my way around like a blind man!



Do I look like the Eveready Rabbit? Do you see me banging a bass drum? So what induces me to keep going and going and going . . . and going . . .

Simple: gold. So far the score is eight-*zip*, with the visitor team way ahead. But I don't just want the highest score. I won't stop until I have every last coin, chest, skull, and ingot in my possession.

The migraine has stopped. But now I have a new infirmity, or let's say handicap: total, abject darkness. The Shadowlands have no light. Somebody must have forgotten to pay the electric bill. And without my darkness spotlight, I'm blind as a bat. I don't like the dark very much. I find it kind of eerie. Ever since I was a kid I've had an irrational fear of the dark. So even though I have my Xartanium pendant to light my way, it illuminates only a small radius, and I still feel leery of the noises in the darkness. I sweat profusely trying to

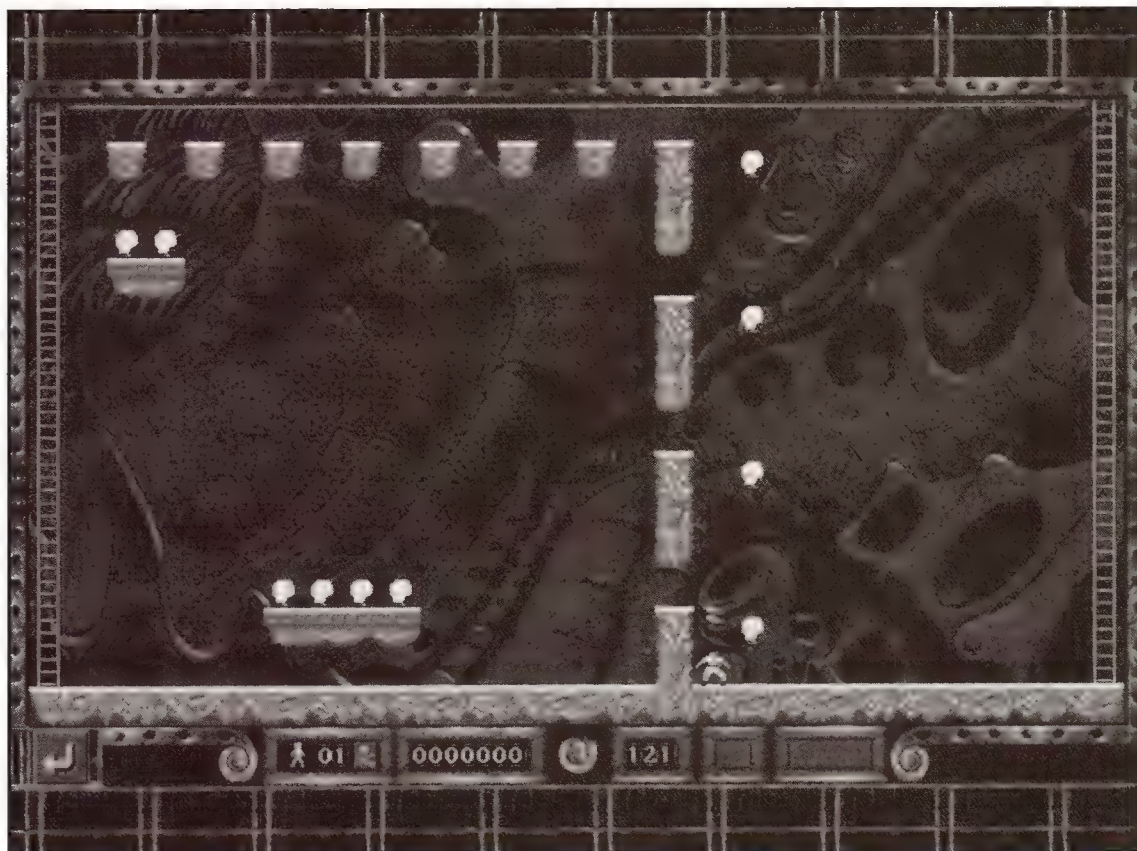
figure out the location of the exit door. You'd think that these luminous portals would shine through the darkness, but apparently their radiance is too faint to light the way. In some cases, the greatest challenge is finding the exact location of the gray exit door.

Other than the pendant, I don't find any new tools that I can use against the monks. The caverns are filled with a blue-colored turf. I guess it's the only kind of life form that can survive long in pitch darkness. The monks' vision, on the other hand, doesn't seem impaired. They have perfect night vision. While they avoid fumbling around in the dark like I do, my pendant is a dead giveaway to my location—except when I disappear into the hideouts. The hideouts conceal me completely, including the crystal. Otherwise, I simply make the best use of what I have on hand, trust my instincts, and apply what I've learned in the other kingdoms to master my way through the shadowy caverns.

LEVEL 121

Some genius in central stunt design exploits my fear of the darkness by starting me off in a tailspin. To one side, suspended golden skulls pass by me. To the other, I feel clammy blue turf rubbing against my shoulders. I have the feeling I'm falling down into a bottomless pit and let out a shriek. At least it cures my migraine. Fortunately, I don't encounter any mad monks yet.

1. I scope the eastern flank first. I run to the southeastern corner and scale the eastern long ladder to the roof beam. Then I traverse west until I dangle directly over the column of golden skulls and let gravity do the rest.
2. A blue turf barricade prevents eastern passage along the cavern floor, so I loop up to the roof beam and traverse over a partition to the western half. I catch two golden skulls on a narrow ledge and drop down to it. I then leap east. On my way down, I catch sight of a wider ledge not far above the cavern floor. I traverse east along the roof beam to a point about halfway between the western long ladder and the central partition. It works. The last golden skulls sit on this ledge, the gray exit door appears adjacent to the lip of the lower ledge, and I dive into the invisible light.



LEVEL 121

LEVEL 122

My eyes slowly adjust to the light given off by the pendant. Golden skulls line a shallow and wide chamber beneath me, and a jackhammer stands idle overhead. But still, how much of an initial impression can I gain just from the limited range of the Xartanium's luminescence? Trusting my instincts, I take the jackhammer and try to count my blessings. At least there aren't any monks in this shadow cavern, but I dread the moment.

1. I rise to the pipe ledge in the northwest corner and remove the jackhammer. I carry it across the rooftop tier to the shallow and wide cavern on the eastern boundary. I then spike through the roof layer and drop in to clean up the bounty.
2. I exit through the bottom of the chamber and land on an elevated bedrock tier. Running west, I reach the western long ladder and climb into the enclosure that I saw in the beginning. I don't need the jackhammer to enter it and empty out the golden skulls.

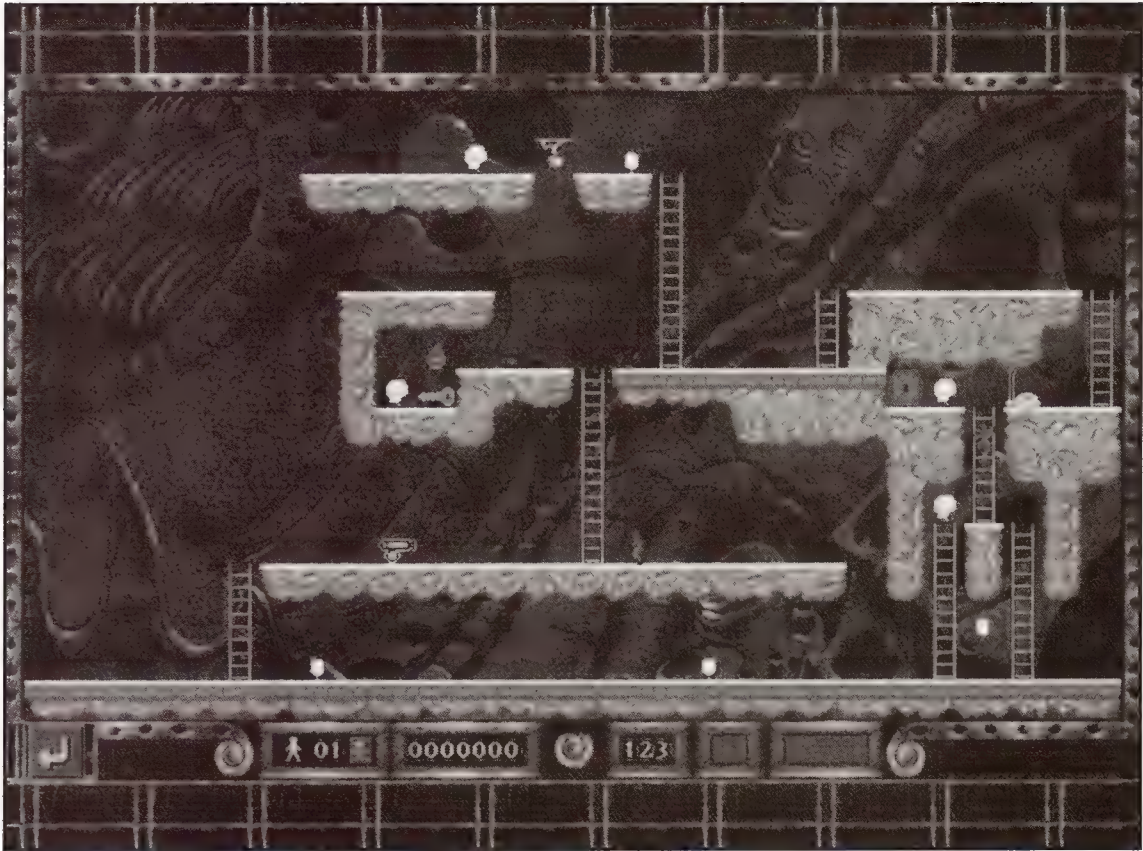
**LEVEL 122**

3. I hear the ringing of the gray exit door. After I hammer through the floor of the chamber, I drop down to the bedrock tier and find the portal inside a small chamber near the center of the shadow cavern. I plow directly overhead and lower into the bluish cyberplasm.

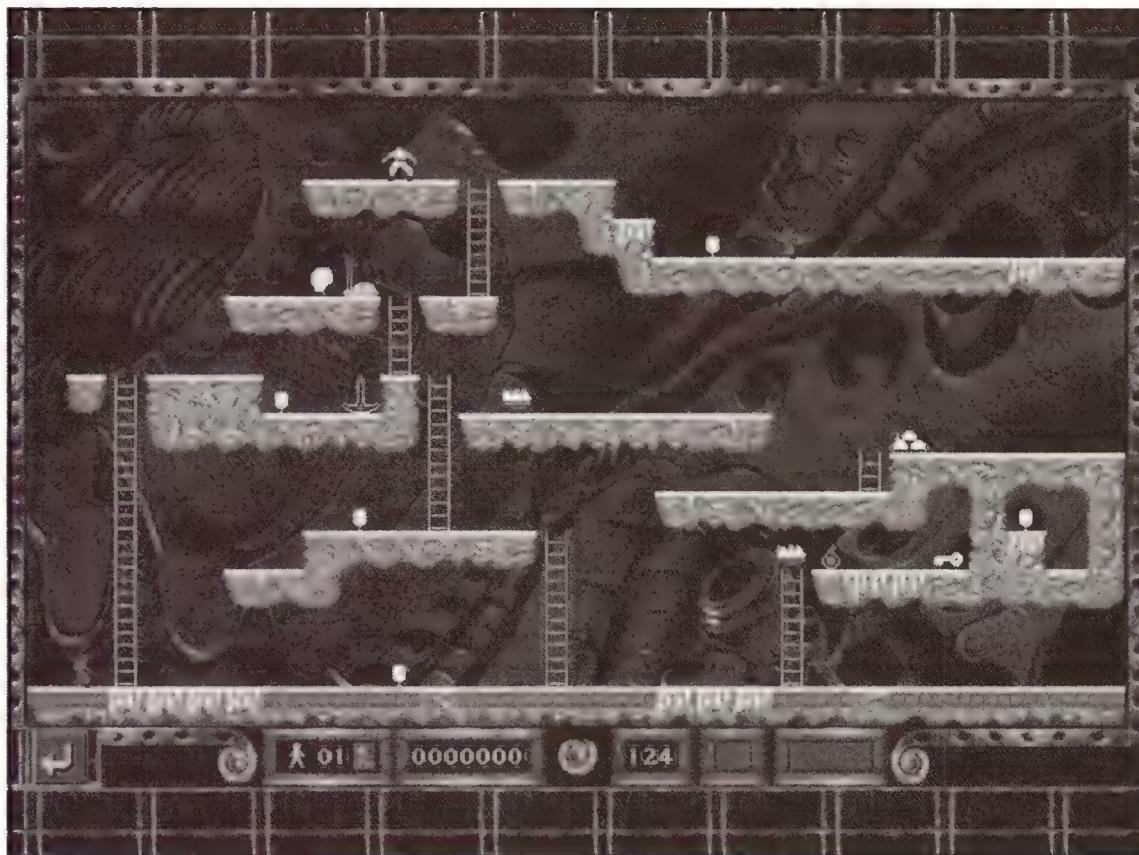
LEVEL 123

Just as my confidence surges, I confront two mad monks. Fortunately, the third shadow cavern comes equipped with a canister of befuddlement gas that helps me through some tight spots on the bedrock cavern floor.

1. Hanging from the monkey bar, I snatch gold from the adjacent narrow ledges and then release through the gap. During my free fall, I catch my first glimpse of a mad monk. He's soon joined by the second

**LEVEL 123**

- monk rover. I trap them in a blue turf pit near the entrance to a “G”-shaped cave. From inside, I pick up gold and a small bomb but leave the red key behind before exiting through the floor.
2. I find a canister of befuddlement gas on the ledge below and drop down to the cavern floor. One mad monk pursues me, but I catch him in a green cloud before he can come any farther. Heading east, I pick up a gold coin in the center and then come face to face with the second monk. A spray from the canister stalls him as I head up a nearby ladder.
 3. The ladder is the first of two painter’s ladders that fuse inside a vault chamber, where the red door stands. I stash the golden skull in my rucksack and hear the chime signal indicating that it’s time to get the red key. I could take the mad monk snare, but that would mean leaving the canister behind here. I drop down the other painter’s ladder to avoid the monk and cross to the “G”-shaped cave



LEVEL 124

where I first found and left the key to the Magic Kingdom. I return to the vault chamber without incident, open the red door, and dive into the Matterhorn bobsled run.

LEVEL 124

Two mad monks square off with me in this cavern as well, but this time I don't have befuddlement gas. The pickaxe appeals to me less than the mad monk snare, which reduces the combined threat by half.

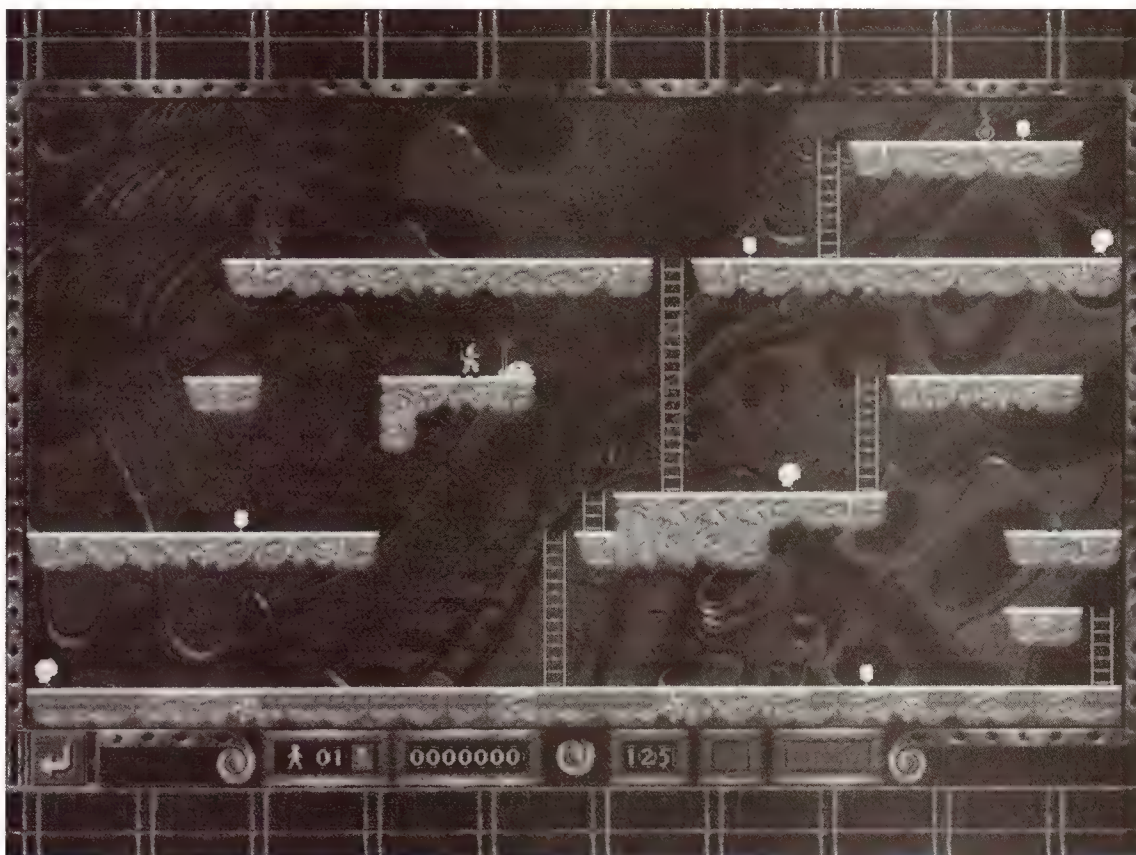
1. From the narrow roof ledge, I drop below and grab the gold coin and the mad monk snare. Before the monk patrol can handcuff me, I blast an access hole to the ledge below that. The access hole becomes a turf pit for the mad monk while I run east along the mid-level turf tier.

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2. A step ladder leads up to the roof of a neighboring small cave and cell-chamber. The latter has trap-door turf that leads me directly to a gold piece. Lifting my feet off the turf tar, I fall through more trap-door turf to the cavern floor, where I set the snare in preparation for the first unlucky monk. A turf pit combines nicely with the snare to remove both monks: one permanently, the other just for the moment.
 3. The monks thus detained, I buy myself a little extra time to sweep the small cave overhead of gold and a key. I blast an exit hole just as the second monk has crawled out of the turf pit and wait for him to come up the painter's ladder so that I can escape underneath. My plan succeeds. I then make my way up to the rooftop ridge that extends into the northeastern quadrant.
 4. When I clean off the last gold coin, I leap off the ridge and drop through trap-door turf along the eastern boundary of the cavern. The gray exit door materializes inside the far cell-chamber, and I whoosh away from this shadow nightmare.

LEVEL 125

Standing on a pipe ledge in the middle of this shadow cavern, I can see little beyond the mad monk snare next to me. But I can hear two monks lurking in the shadows, waiting to pounce when I least expect it.

1. I want to eliminate the first monk as quickly as possible. I leap off the eastern lip of the ledge and land near a painter's ladder on the cavern floor. I climb to a mid-elevation ledge, install the snare, and wait. I can hear the soft padding of their feet; then their beady red eyes come into view. The first steps into the trap, and I scamper up the central painter's ladder.
2. Moving into the northeast quadrant, I pick up a gold coin and then ascend to a blue ridge, where I find a small bomb and another coin. Looping down to the turf tier, I trap a mad monk in a turf pit just underneath the ridge.
3. I clear an access hole in the turf tier and return to the pipe ledge. This time, I focus on the opposite quadrant, the southwestern one. I



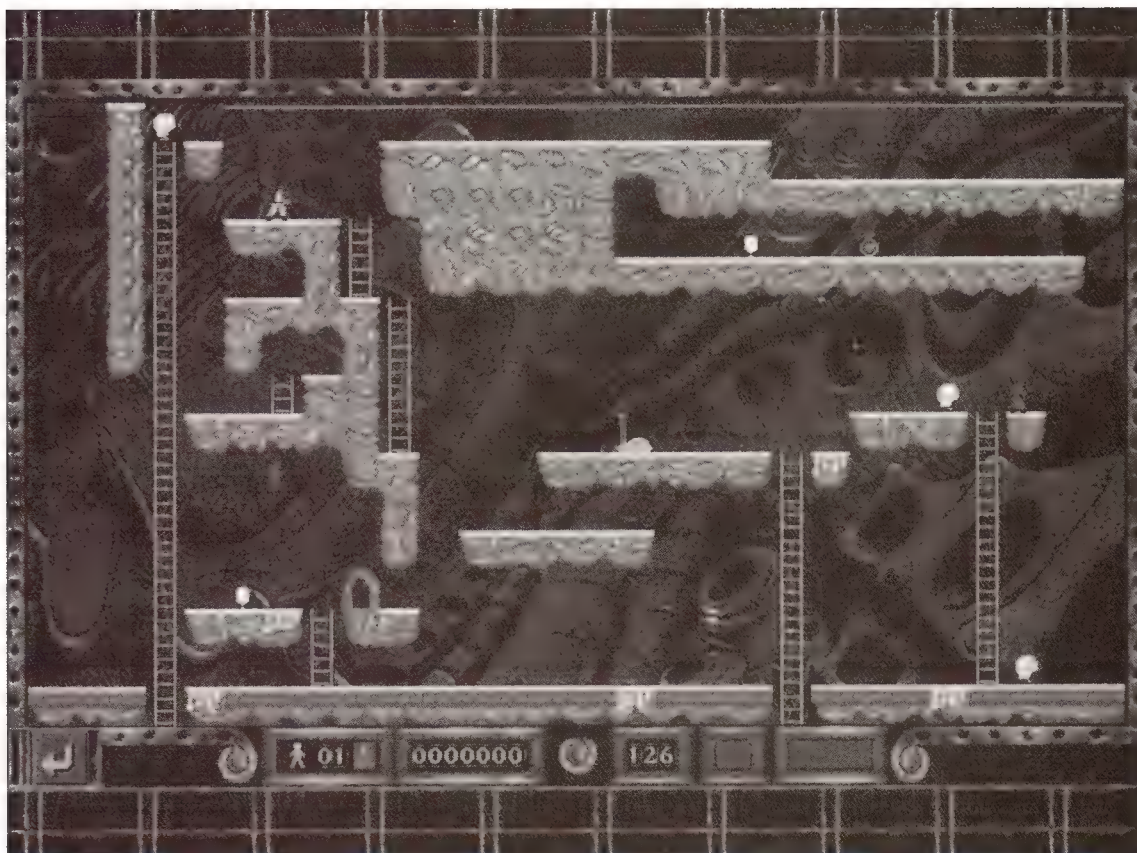
LEVEL 125

find a gold coin on a mid-level ledge, then a golden skull in the extreme corner.

4. Being this far away from the ladders makes me nervous, but fortunately there are patches of turf intermingled with bedrock on the cavern floor. Taking the golden skull triggers the gray exit door in the southeastern corner. First I trap the unsnarled monk in a blue pit, then dash eastward to the opposite corner.

LEVEL 126

I note a circular pattern to my tours. I don't mean a literal circle, but I tend to loop the Shadowlands caverns in two stages: first a tight loop, then a larger loop. For example, in this case I begin in the northwest quadrant and make a tight circle first in a clockwise direction, then a larger circle—or, perhaps, a jagged rectangle—around the perimeter of

**LEVEL 126**

the shadow cavern. Finding no befuddlement gas or jackhammers on this level, I resort to using a hideout and a mad monk snare.

1. It seems so strange hiding out in the dark, but the Xartanium pendant is a dead giveaway. From my starting stance on the short overhang, I run east a very short distance and climb down two painter's ladders until I jump sideways into a free fall. From where I land on the cavern floor, I quickly sneak into the hideaway and wait for the dangerous monks to pass.
2. When it seems safe enough, I bolt west to the long ladder and climb to the northwest corner. I complete the tight loop when I reach the golden skull in the northwest corner. Crossing east via the roof beam, I start the larger loop.
3. In the northeast corner, I drop onto a blue ridge and blast entry to the ridge below it, where I find a small bomb and a gold coin. I then

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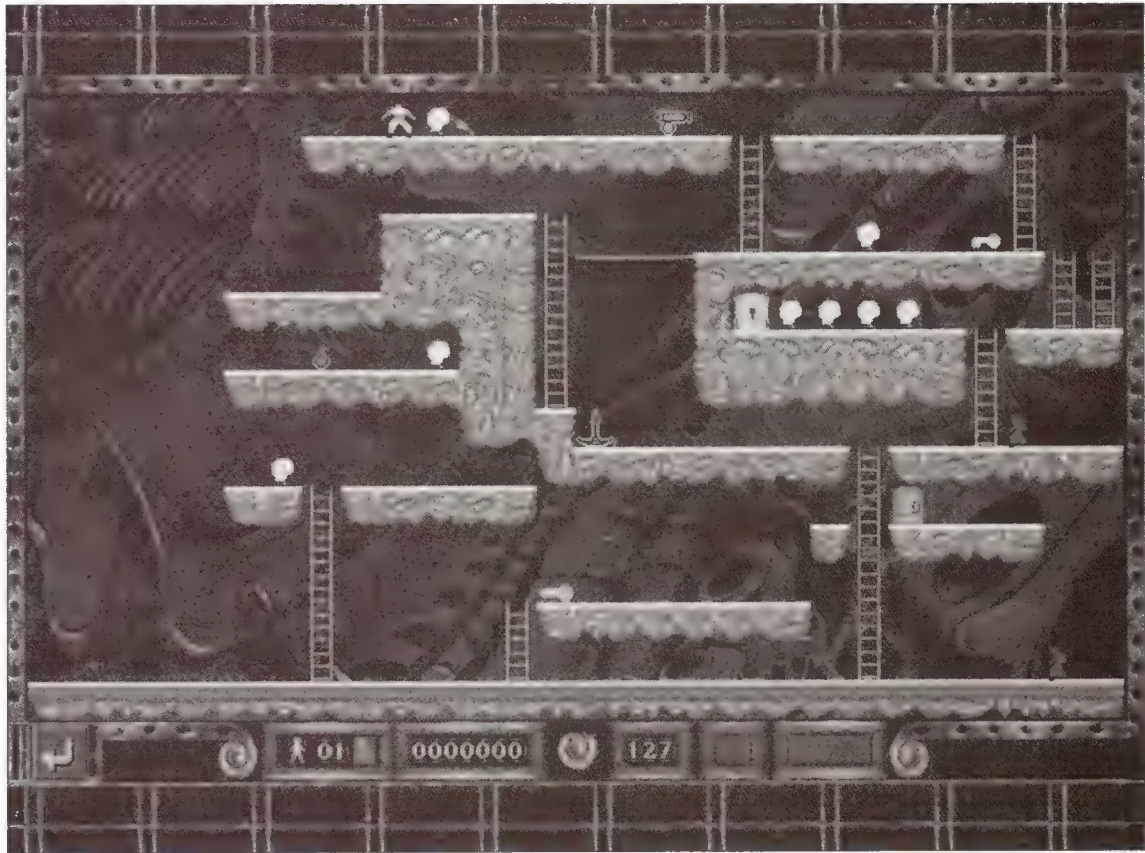
return to the eastern border and jump into a free fall. I land in the southeast corner. Dashing a slight distance west, I find a painter's ladder crested by a "T"-ledge. I find more gold up there.

4. Moving west, I hop down to a second "T"-ledge, which stands just a notch below the first one in elevation. There, I find a mad monk snare, which I promptly set, but I don't wait for him to fall into it. With the pole whipping behind me, I dash again to the western long ladder and try to locate the gray exit door. It doesn't take long: it glistens inside a little nook just below the overhang where I began this tour. Finishing the large loop, I plunge into the sparkling pool of light.

LEVEL 127

I prefer starting from the top of a cavern. In normal lighting, I would have an easier time harvesting the ledges and tiers of gold. But even in the Shadowlands, without the benefit of light, I find that starting from the top takes less time to cover more square feet of ledge space than starting from the bottom. Perhaps there are exceptions, but I definitely feel like I have the advantage. Of course, the befuddlement gas helps tremendously.

1. Bolting east over the rooftop tier, I find the gas canister and double back to the northwest quadrant. A giant blue brachiosaur straight out of *Jurassic Park* has a giant gold filling. I pierce through his snout and drop inside his mouth to remove it.
2. Okay, so I have an active imagination. But the darkness tends to do that to me. I punch a hole through the lower ridge—is that better?—and drop down to the cavern floor. Running east, I encounter a mad monk who is hell-bent on taking his frustrations out on me. I douse him with befuddlement gas, then ascend the painter's ladder to the vault-door chamber.
3. Either the mad monk is shaking off the effects of the gas, or another monk is closing in from below. I'm not sure who it is, but I have to act quickly. I trade in the canister for the golden key, then fire an access hole from the top ridge. With no time to spare, I clean up the five golden skulls, unlock the vault door, and ride the electronic slide to the next cavern.

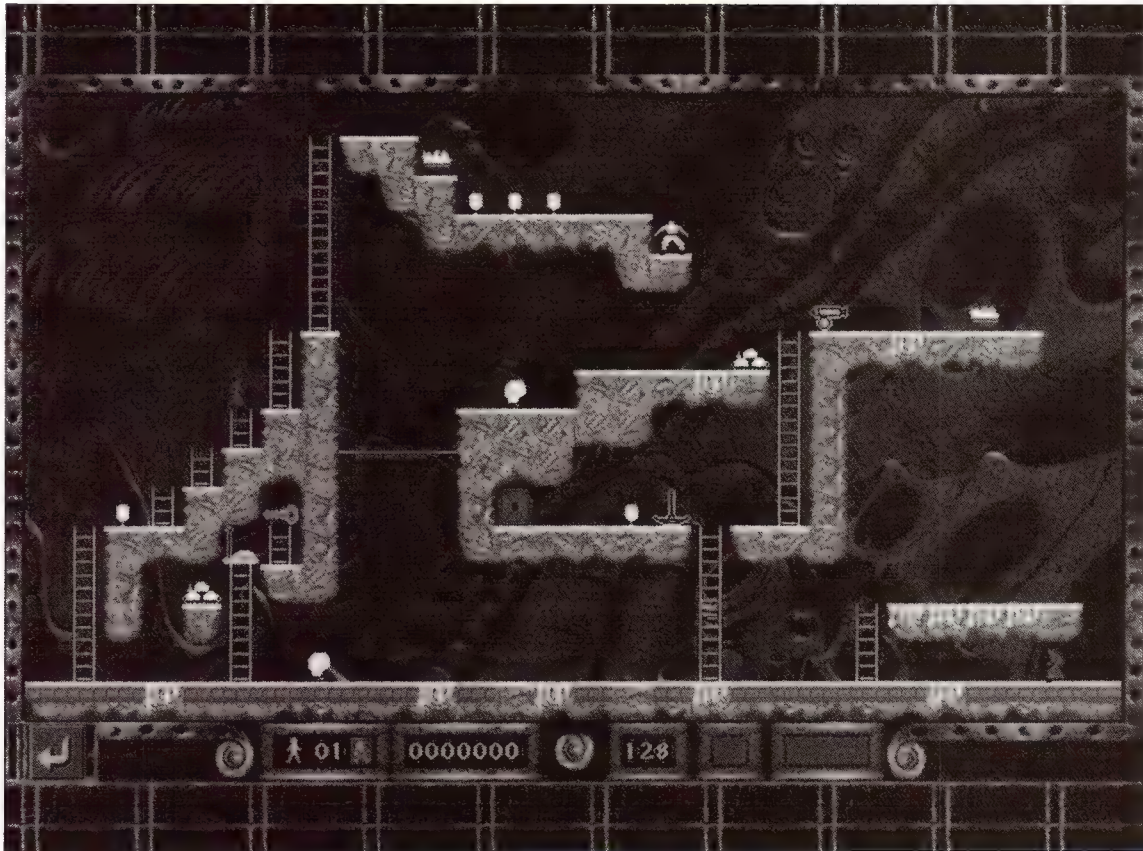


LEVEL 127

LEVEL 128

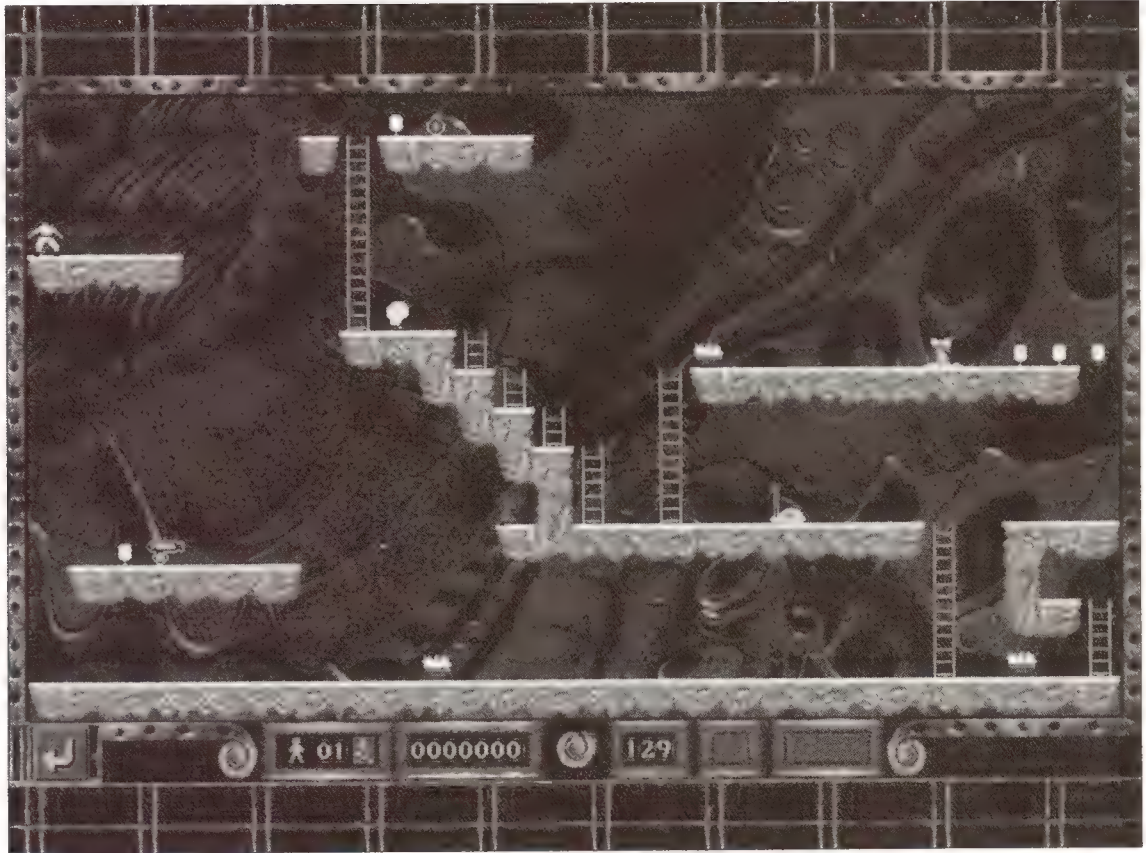
This cavern represents a significant, albeit not huge, jump in difficulty. Though my eyes have now fully adjusted to the surroundings, I have to be careful not to get too cavalier with the mad monks. The narrow escape in the previous cavern was forgivable, but now I have to act with a little more forethought. I have my first chance to show my new attitude at the very start, and it pays off.

1. From the tip of the cleft ridge, I jump down to the mid-level tier and run east toward the top rungs of a painter's ladder. En route, I scopp up a gas canister and jump into a free fall along the eastern border where I land on a much lower ridge. It has heaping gobs of slime all over it. I could make it through, but with mad monks nearby, it's definitely wiser to drop down to the cavern floor. I land, in the southeast corner.



LEVEL 128

2. It takes me less time to travel the same distance because there is only a small patch of turf tar on the cavern floor. A mad monk climbs down the painter's ladder, but I surround him with a blast of anti-pest perfume. The gas does enhance his body odor problem, I must say. Driving farther west, I intercept the second monk with befuddlement spray, then exchange the canister for the mad monk snare that stands at the top of a painter's ladder inside a craggy free-form enclosure. I plant the snare at the foot of the ladder, then return up the ladder.
3. When the monk emerges from his state of confusion, he upends in the snare while I dash up the western cliffs via step ladders and a painter's ladder. Actually, I prefer to call these the step-ladder steps, but I guess that sounds redundant. At the top of the ladder, I find a flood of gold on a trough-shaped roof-ridge.
4. Because of the darkness, I have no idea that the cleft tip belongs to the trough-shaped ridge. I have truly come full circle. Now it's time



LEVEL 129

to focus on the center of the cavern to scour for the last bit of gold. I find it on the roof of the red-vault chamber. The bells chime. I drop from a monkey bar to the cavern floor and prepare my ascent.

5. Funny. I was just thinking that I haven't used a pickaxe during my entire time so far in the Shadowlands. I spot one on the way into the vault chamber but leave it there. Rarely do I find a problem here that a pickaxe can solve better than befuddlement gas. The key works in the lock, and I dive into Tomorrowland.

LEVEL 129

Though I have a greater distance overall to cover in this cavern, the befuddlement gas and mad-monk snare in combination make it easier going. Both tools are becoming my favorites. I usually leave pickaxes where I find them, and I don't find much use for small bombs either. I

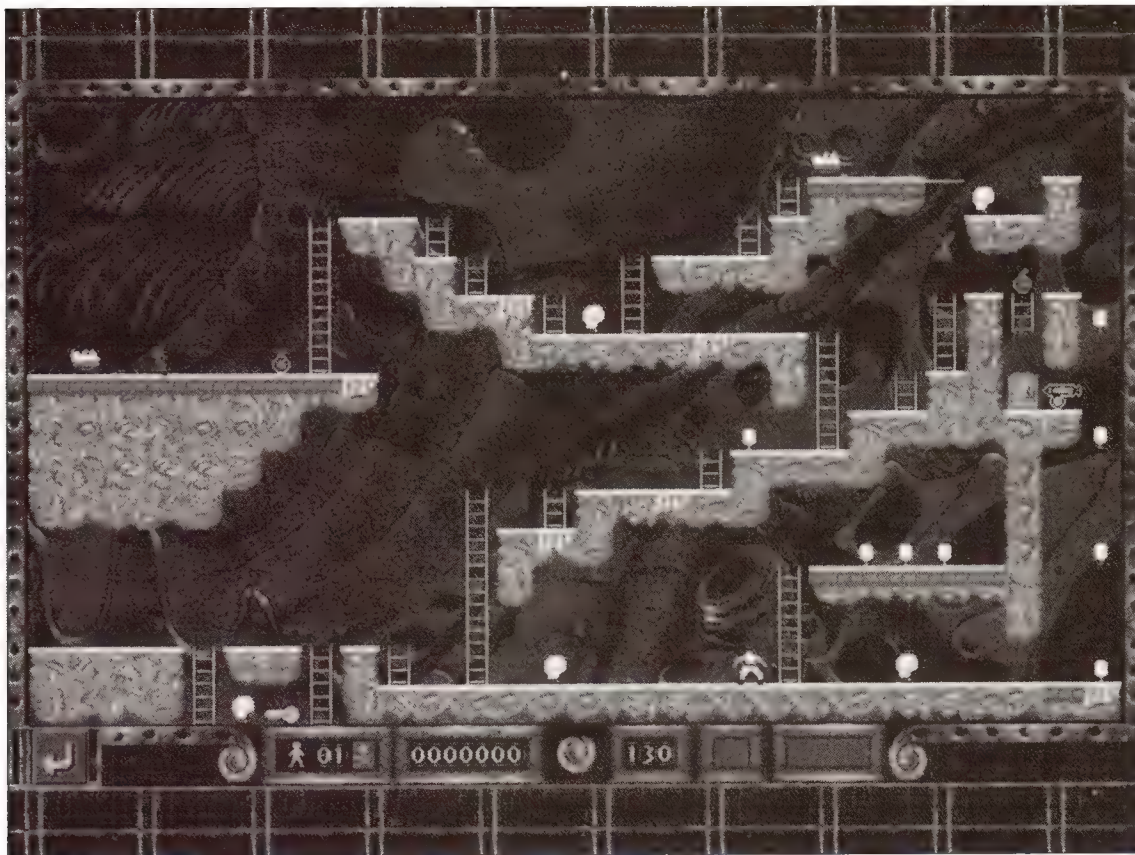
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usually love using small bombs, but you need strong lighting to use them effectively. In close quarters, I'll take the snare-gas combination any day.

1. From the crow's nest, I plunge down to a suspended ledge, where I find a gold coin and a canister of befuddlement gas. I step off the western tip and drop down to the southwest corner. I almost collide head-on with a mad monk while running east. Fortunately, the gas acts quickly enough that I don't get backed up in a corner and pummeled to death.
2. Sobered by that encounter, I prepare a little better for the second monk, whom I meet face to face in the southeastern quadrant. I actually get him from the opposite direction after I pick up some gold. I hurry past him to a painter's ladder that tops off on a mid-level ridge. There, I find the mad-monk snare. I set down the canister west of where I want to install the snare because I expect the monk to come up the ladder behind me. After I set the trap, I pick up the canister and run east across an upper ridge to harvest the gold coins.
3. One gold coin hangs suspended beyond the ridge, so when I grab it I hurtle downward to the cavern floor again. At this stage, I've just completed a tight circle. I land on top of a "C"-shaped ledge. I meet the second monk near where the other dangles from a snare. I pump him with gaseous befuddlement, then charge up a razorback incline made of turf and step ladders.
4. A painter's ladder leads up to a diving ledge. I find gold both at the foot and the top of the ladder. The chimes ring forth, and I perform my best Louganis double somersault with a twist—okay, I'm lying again—as I plunge down the Acapulco cliffs to the small tide pool in the southeast corner.

LEVEL 130

I'm standing on the cavern floor, trying to get my bearings as best as I can and develop some plan of action, when all of a sudden my video game watch sounds off. What is this irrelevant contraption doing on my wrist? I need befuddlement gas. I need mad monk snares. I need jackhammers. Give me a pickaxe, for crying out loud, but take the watch. It's history. It's irrelevant. And it's putting my life in danger. How could I forget to take something like that off?

**LEVEL 130**

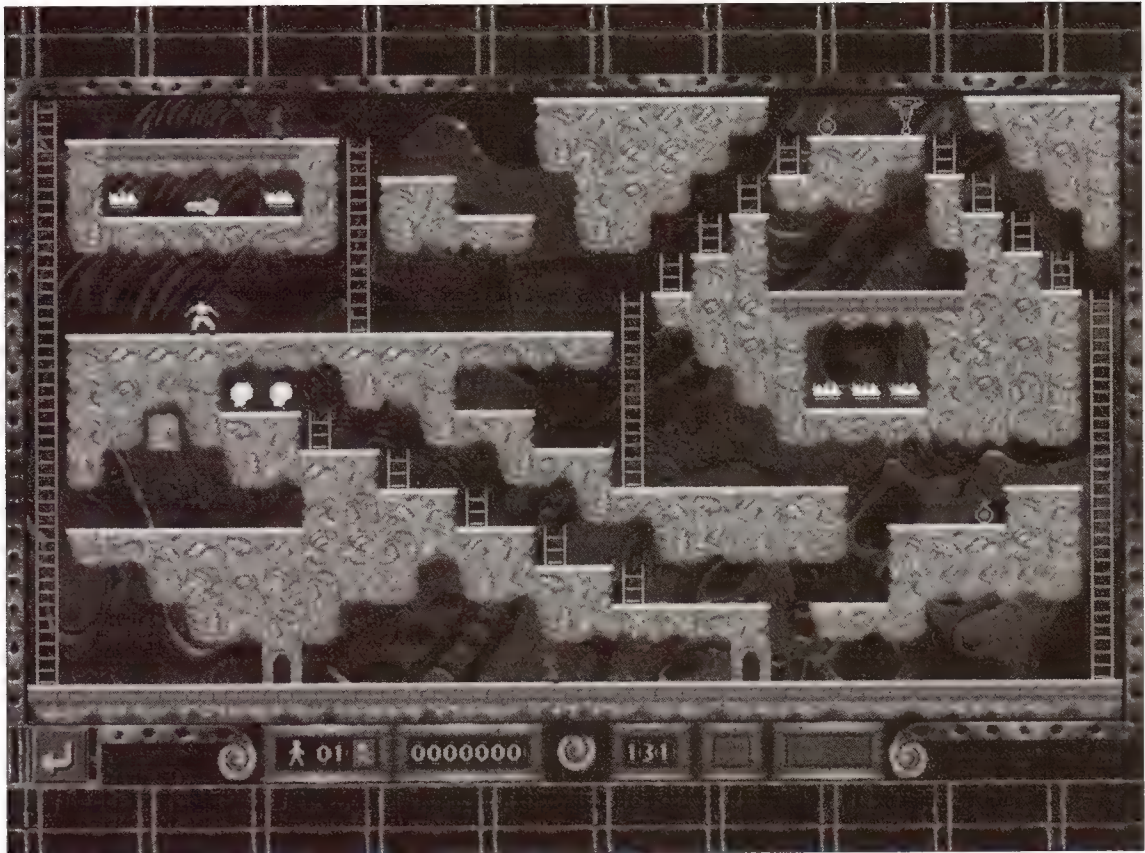
1. I need to get the befuddlement gas as quickly as possible. I run west to a painter's ladder, rise along a razorback, then navigate ladders and beams to a small repository in the northeast corner.
2. The befuddlement gas canister stands beside the green vault door. I temporarily sacrifice a suspended gold coin in order to take the canister with me. I'll have to come back for the coin later. I plunge down to the cavern floor, picking up suspended coins along the eastern boundary, and stun a mad monk with a cloud of green gas.
3. After nabbing the gold coins on a southeastern ledge, I cross into the middle of the cavern floor and experience heavy enemy gunfire. This is definitely the no-man's-land of the Shadowlands. But I gas the monks, and that puts a brief end to their thumping frenzy. I return to the repository, where I retrieve the gold coin. Swerving up off the cavern floor, I jet up the opposite razorback and enter the northwestern quadrant.

4. Over the edge, I land on a flat bedrock ledge with a gold treasure chest against the corner. I then double back and go airborne, but before touching ground I see the two mad monks clustered on a painter's ladder nearby. I have only one gold piece to take. In a vain effort, I squirt befuddlement gas over the ladder then sink down into the basement chamber.
5. I exchange my canister for the red key and take the golden skull. I think the monks are still swirling in the green haze, but they swoop right down and almost nail me. I carve a blue pit in the southwest corner, then dash over their heads, up the central system of razorbacks and ladders, until I return to the vault repository, where I disappear into the blue gulf.

LEVEL 131

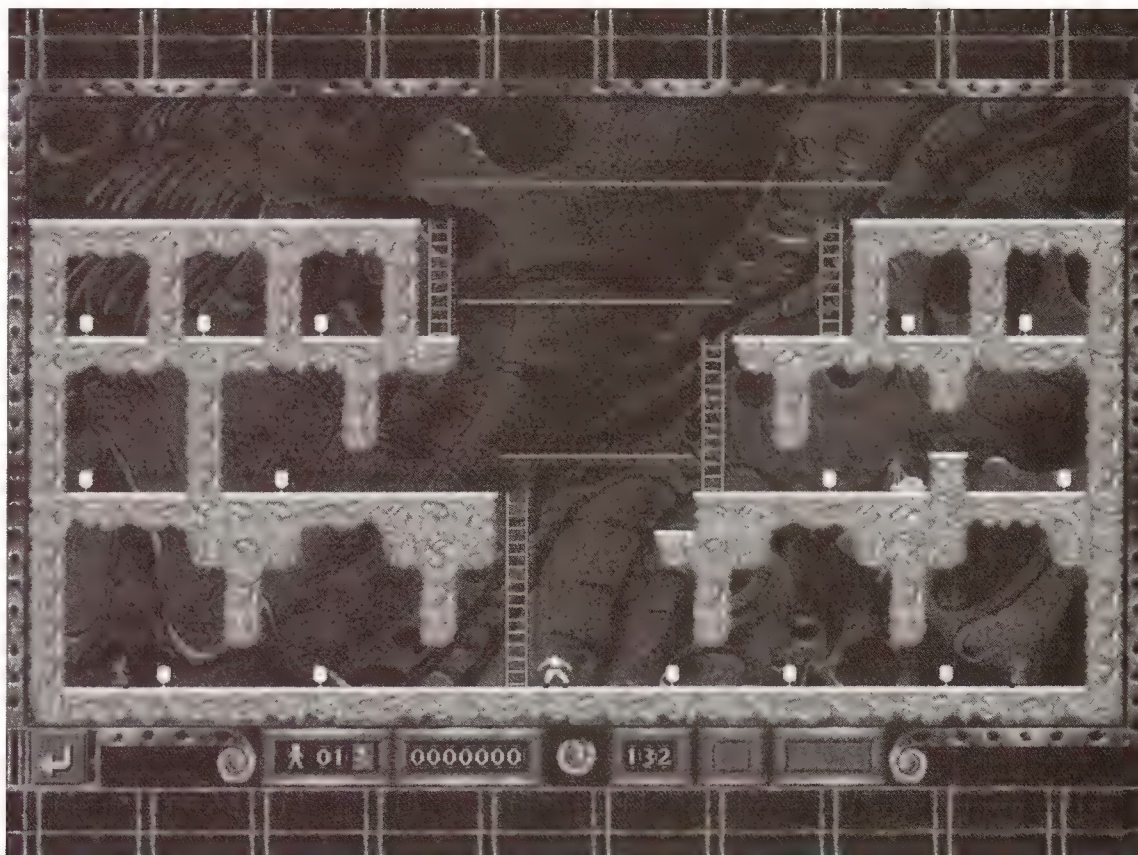
I'm beginning to think that the imperial architect of the Shadowlands has a fetish for alligators. I've never seen so many razorbacks and fissures in my life, and in such tight quarters. The key to success here, however, has more to do with being in the right place at the right time than anything else. Does that make sense? Go fissure. In other news this evening, I set off my first small bomb.

1. When I know the location of the vault door and the location of the key, and they're not that close together, I usually try to place the key somewhere close to the door so that when I come back, I won't get killed trying to find it. Using the laser blaster, I remove the western wall of the northwest cupboard, clean out the gold, and take the green key. Firing down through the floor, I jump through the blast hole and then fire another entrance into the narrow fissure. I don't spend much time looking for the perfect place. I just dump the key and run down the steps.
2. The fissure turns out to be an old sewage pipe that dumps its contents on the southeastern quadrant. That's where I get the blue carpet treatment. Thankfully, a hideout provides cover while a manic monk passes nearby. First I have to lead him on; then he eventually heads west. At this point, I break from the alcove and speed up the

**LEVEL 131**

eastern long ladder to the rooftop ledges, where I find a jackhammer and a small bomb.

3. I'm in the mood to use a jackhammer. It's not a quiet instrument, but I figure I've already blown it by now with the video wrist thing. The laser blaster helps me drop down to the bedrock roof of a gold cache. I hammer through the eastern end, sweep west, and then drop through trap-door turf to a mid-level ledge and climb up the fissure.
4. The organ pipes sound overhead, announcing my trans-cavernous connection with cyberspace. In other words, the gray exit door appears. Unfortunately, I head deep into the red zone. I unhook a small bomb and toast the monks in the blast. The crater provides ample room for me to jump down, pick up the key, and unlock the vault door, before I hurl myself down the information superhighway.



LEVEL 132

LEVEL 132

The cubicles on both sides of this cavern contain gold pieces that force me to make wide, looping scans, first on the eastern half, then on the western. Navigating the central system of monkey bars, and using an available mad monk snare, I manage to outfox the sentries and clean out the cavern.

1. From the center pole position, I scoot up the painter's ladder and traverse east to a ledge containing a mad monk snare. I'll just hold onto it for now, climbing up to the northeastern quadrant on the roof of the cubicles. Starting first with the east set, I punch my first access hole with my laser blaster.
2. I collect gold as I drop down through the enclosures. In the southeast corner, I prepare the snare and fire a blue pit just in front of it. Both monks fall into my traps, and I dash back to the central network again to work up to the next set of cubicles. Unexpectedly, a crunched

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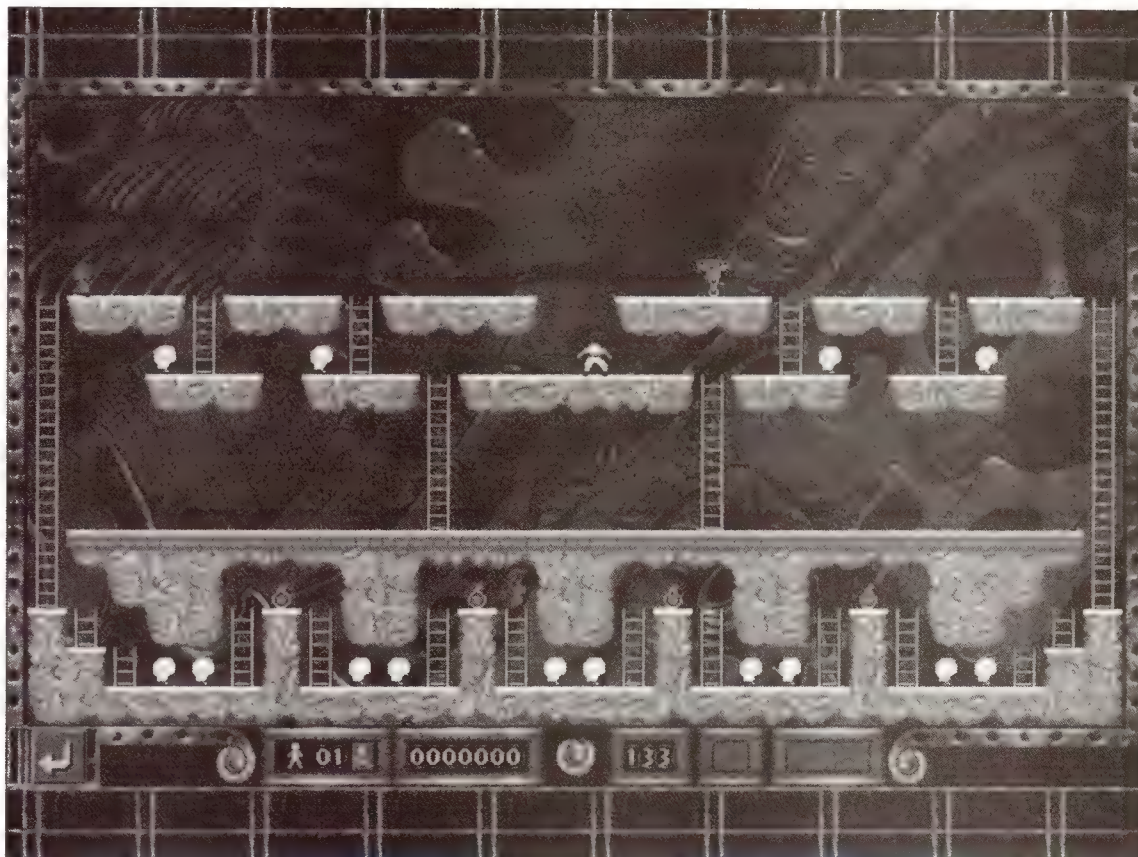
monk reincarnates nearby, so I have to back up on a middle ledge and drop him in the blue turf before resuming my pillaging.

3. I drop through two stacked cubicles adjacent to the first set in the eastern half of the cavern. This time, however, it is unnecessary to drop to the cavern floor. Instead, I take the monkey beam over to the western side, where I set to work on the outermost cubicle.
4. The western set works the same as the eastern set. I keep blasting access holes where the last coin stands, then drop down the open manhole. Because one monk still dangles from a snare, I meet opposition from only one monk on the cavern floor. I stomp over him and loop back up to the western set of inside cubicles.
5. After I complete the fourth round, dispatching the monk once again in the turf along the way, I loop up for a fifth and final time. The gray exit door materializes in the northwest corner, and I climb into blue-green cyber-gel.

LEVEL 133

I've spent the entire last month without food, drink, or sleep while plundering the caverns of the Evil Empire. Doctors will tell you this is impossible, but I achieve it. I may look a little ghostly pale, but I'm a determined thief when there's a huge reward to be had. All the caverns are subterranean—I need to get out in the sun again. But this one actually has a subterranean cavern within a subterranean cavern. Most of the cash is stashed in the basement catacombs.

1. Before getting to the catacombs in all their cramped splendor, I cruise the rooftop ledges, trying to avoid trap-door turf where I can, snatching a golden skull here and there, dodging mad monks there and here.
2. Finally, I enter the catacombs from the southwest point. Golden skulls line the bottoms in doubles. I have my first encounter with a mad monk who can't seem to make up his mind whether to come after me or not. Finally, I prepare a trap for him on a blue pedestal. This is not enough to get him to surrender any gold. For that, I'll have to trap a monk in the floor turf.
3. The monks don't keep any gold on them. I wind through the catacombs, collecting golden skulls and stashing them in my rucksack,



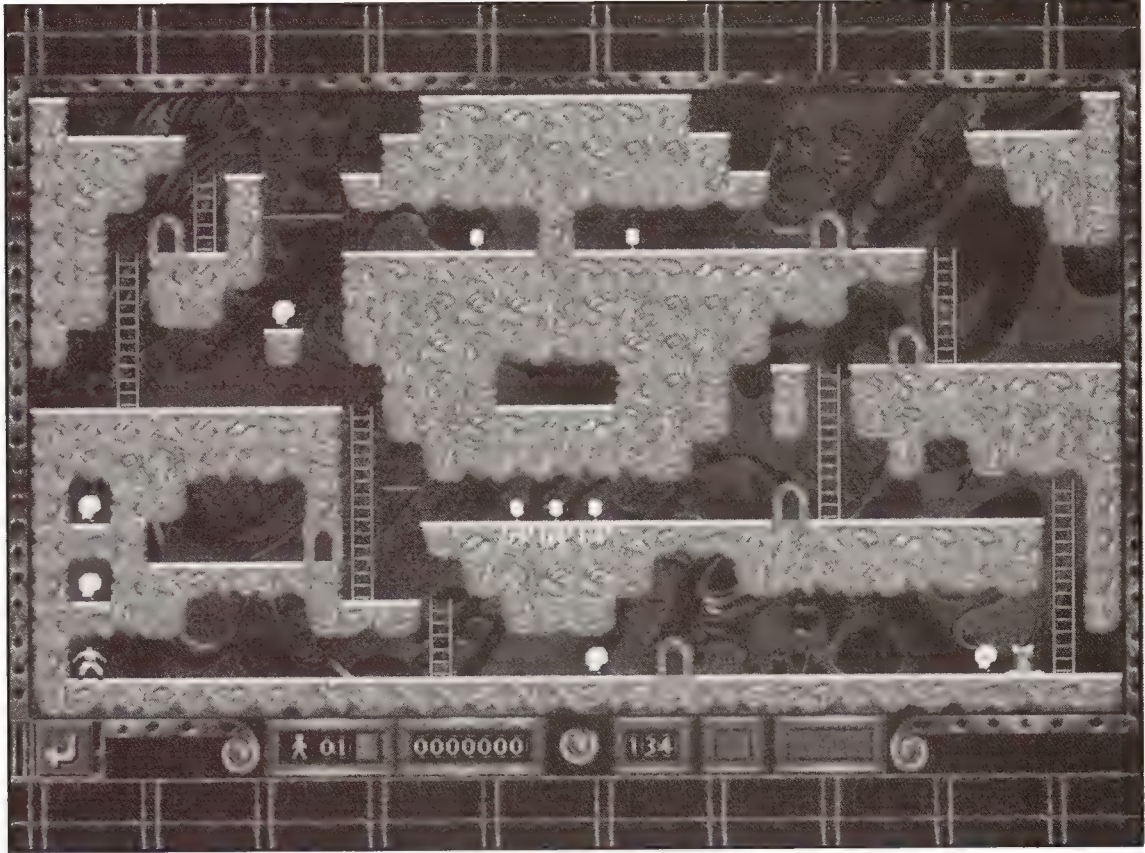
LEVEL 133

until I hear the sirens call me overhead. The gray exit door has appeared in the center roof region of the cavern. To get there, I climb up the eastern long ladder and run west until I come to the ladder and reach up for the TV snow.

LEVEL 134

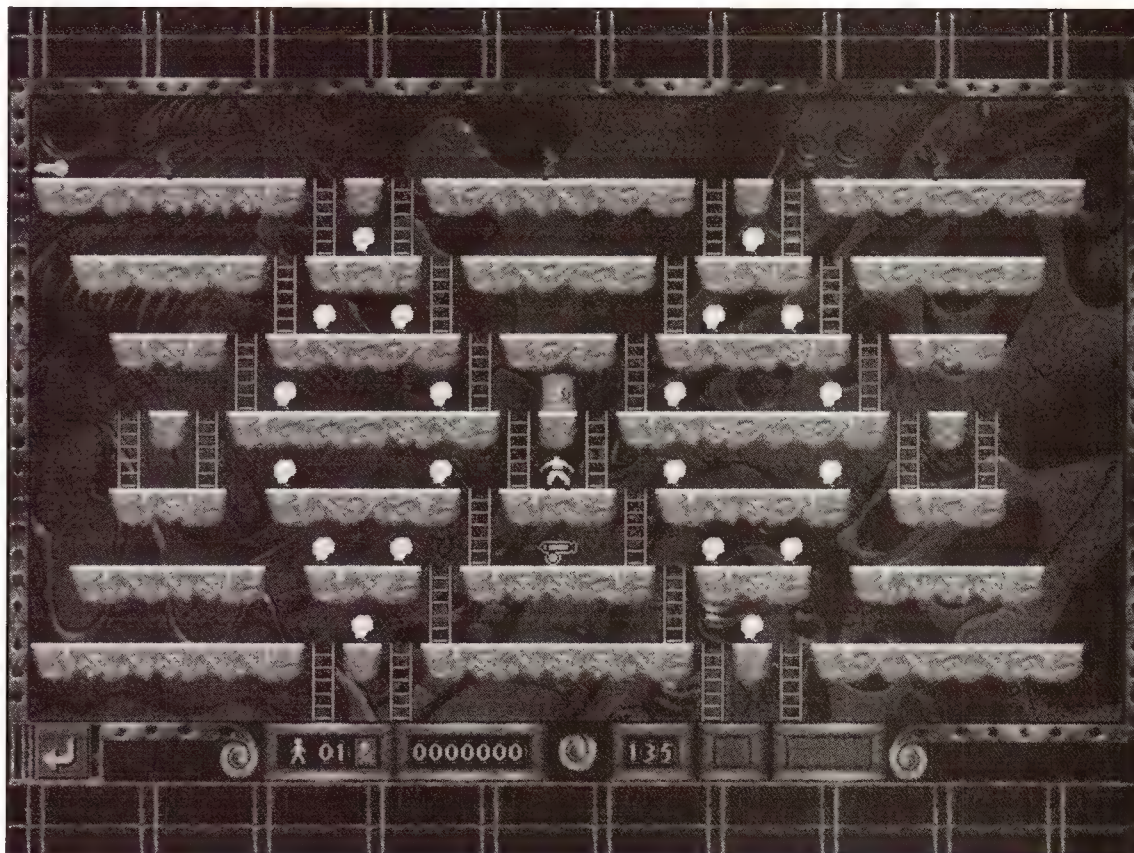
This cavern really gives me a creepy feeling. It reminds me of horrifying tales of haunted mansions echoed round the campfire when I was a wee lad. Those stories never leave you somehow. And the ghouls who populate this haunted house definitely give me a fright once or twice. I just wish I could find a way to crank up the intensity of the Xartanium pendant so that I can see better.

1. With the blue ceiling hanging low over my head, I dash to the eastern end of the cavern along the cavern floor, careful not to scrape

**LEVEL 134**

my head against the moist, chalky turf. At the base of the painter's ladder, I find a bucket of slime and take it along for the ride. You never know when it might come in handy, and I have a ghostly intuition that it will. I climb up to the next tier and cross through a patch of slime, just to move up to a mid-elevation ledge that appears to be the bottom of a high-ceilinged chamber. It reminds me of an old ballroom somehow.

2. When I enter the mouth of a shallow cave, I peer at the ugly faces of the mad monks on the other side of the porous turf barrier. Their hideous eyes pierce through. I drop down onto a tiny ledge that is barely large enough to support the golden skull, then dash west to a vertical column of skull-filled alcoves that consist entirely of trap-door turf. While running east along the cavern floor, I stop to trap a monk rover in a blue pit. I do my search and seizure routine, but he doesn't have any gold on him.
3. Entering the northeastern quadrant, I cut a blue trench for the monk sentries and hop overhead to get the last item of gold.



LEVEL 135

Nestled underneath, the gray exit door intones its idyllic melody. I hurl the contents of the slime bucket at the patch of raw blue turf between me and the two monks, then turn and fire a single blast into the turf just one block east of the partition. Underneath, I find a trap-door chute that leads directly into the exit chamber.

LEVEL 135

When I finish this mission, I'm going back to my yacht, in the open salty air with a line in the water and a book at hand. I didn't used to be claustrophobic, but this cavern does it to me. I'm having a hard enough time grappling with my fear of the dark, but in here we're all squeezed in so tightly that I barely have enough room to breathe. I almost suffocate. No question about it: I much prefer the open sea . . . but all that comes later.

1. Here's how the gold is laid out: There are two diamond-like arrangements, one on the west side, and one on the east. First, I need the

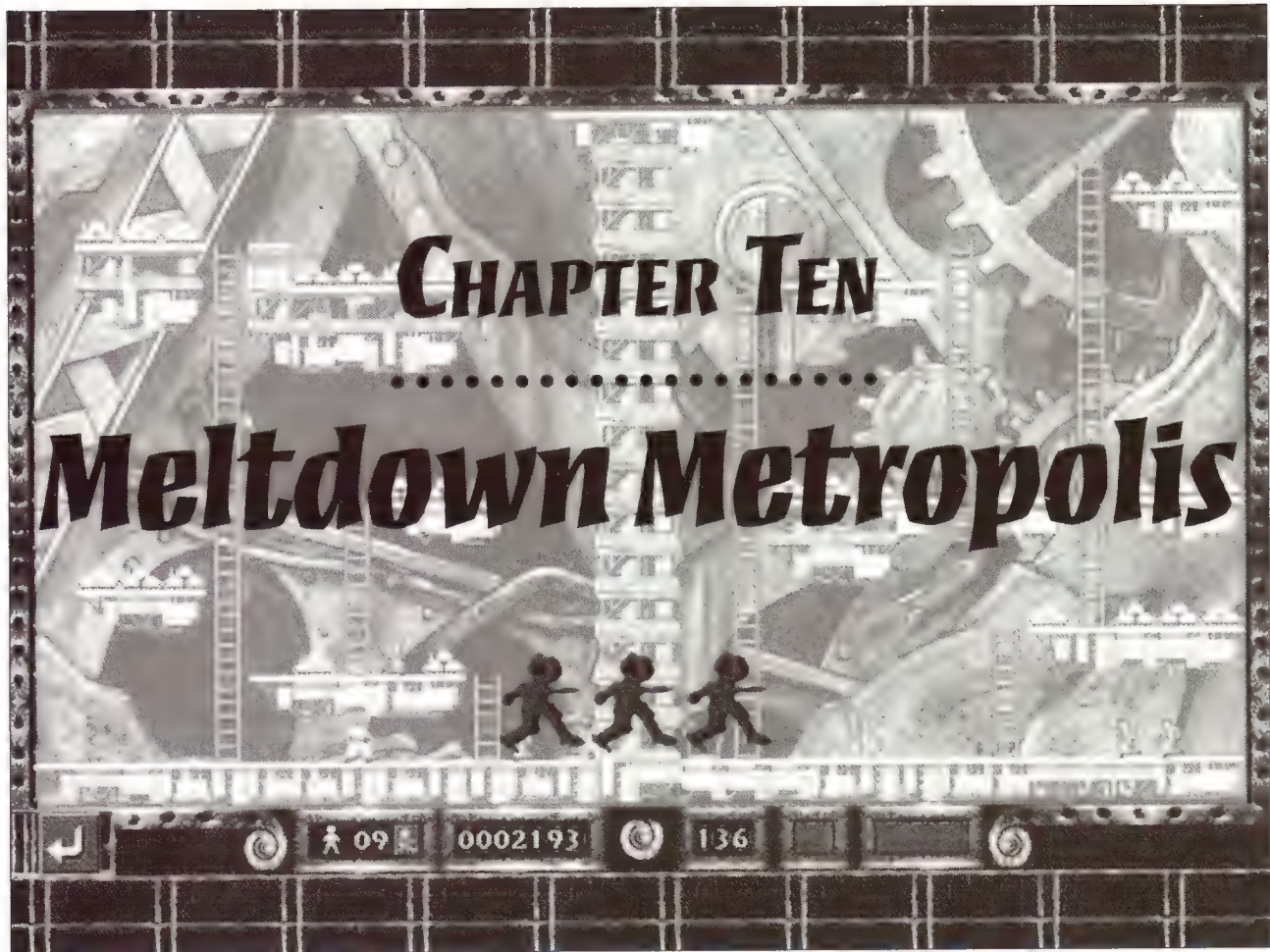
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befuddlement gas. I can't survive in here without it, especially with the red-robed hordes swarming from all sides. I climb a number of painter's ladders until I reach the northwestern corner, then plaster the monks with befuddlement gas until I feel safe enough to walk through their ranks.

2. I work quickly so the monks can't lock a bead on me and throttle me down to the mat. I avoid the ledges altogether, preferring laser incisions since they work faster and help me maintain a safe distance from the evil brethren. The ledges widen at the waist and narrow at the ankles. I fire my last blast on the western frontier to get the golden skull at the foot of the diamond.
3. Now I'll mine the eastern half. It has perfect symmetry, at least as far as I can tell in the limited lighting. The monks still try to harass me, but they fall into a doddering daze when I squirt them with the special lime-colored gas. Dealing with the monks interrupts my efforts about midway into the descent, and I'm eager to finish my sweep.
4. Scooting underneath the cloud, I resume my gold-mining efforts in the southeastern quadrant of the last Shadowlands cavern. The last golden skull invokes the song of the muses. I'm close to the exit, but far from the green key. I passed it in the very beginning when I started this tour, way in the northwestern corner. I couldn't have picked it up then without relinquishing the gas canister, which I wasn't prepared to do at the time. Firing off shots of the gas in a parting salute, I make my way up to the key's location, deposit the canister on the turf, grab the key, and then fire an exit hole through the lip of the tier, adjacent to the western wall.
5. I drop down to the cavern floor, well beyond the reach of the menacing monks. Approaching from underneath, I position myself in front of the green vault door, turn the key in the slot, and leap into the celestial fizz.

CONCLUSION

I'm really glad to leave this cavern. My phobias are happy—and so is my wallet. Next, I'll enter the urban jungle of the Meltdown Metropolis and discover the virtues and wonders of the one-way transporters. Beam me up, Scotty!



A strange thing happens to me on the way to the Meltdown Metropolis, the tenth and final kingdom. I'm soaring through the information superhighway like Superman when this mad monk flies in beside me. I panic. They have their own infobahn, I think. Mine is off limits to them. So what do I do? Sue him? There's no way to detonate a small bomb, no means to create a turf pit, no place to set up a mad monk snare. There isn't anything I can do in this fiber-optic tunnel to get rid of him. Just as I'm checking how many lives I have left, a human hand comes forward and shakes mine.

"Dawson, special operations, CIA." My panic turns to dread. "You've been out of touch with us. We were beginning to worry about you."

I laugh my famous disarming chuckle. "No need to worry about me," I say. "To what do I owe this special visit?"

"I'm here for the rucksack."

“But you can’t have it,” I tell him bluntly. I then grab him and strong-arm him out of cyber-orbit. Dawson bumps against a sub-space field and wipes out big time. I haven’t even seen boat-racing accidents that devastating. All I meant to do was give him a little shove.

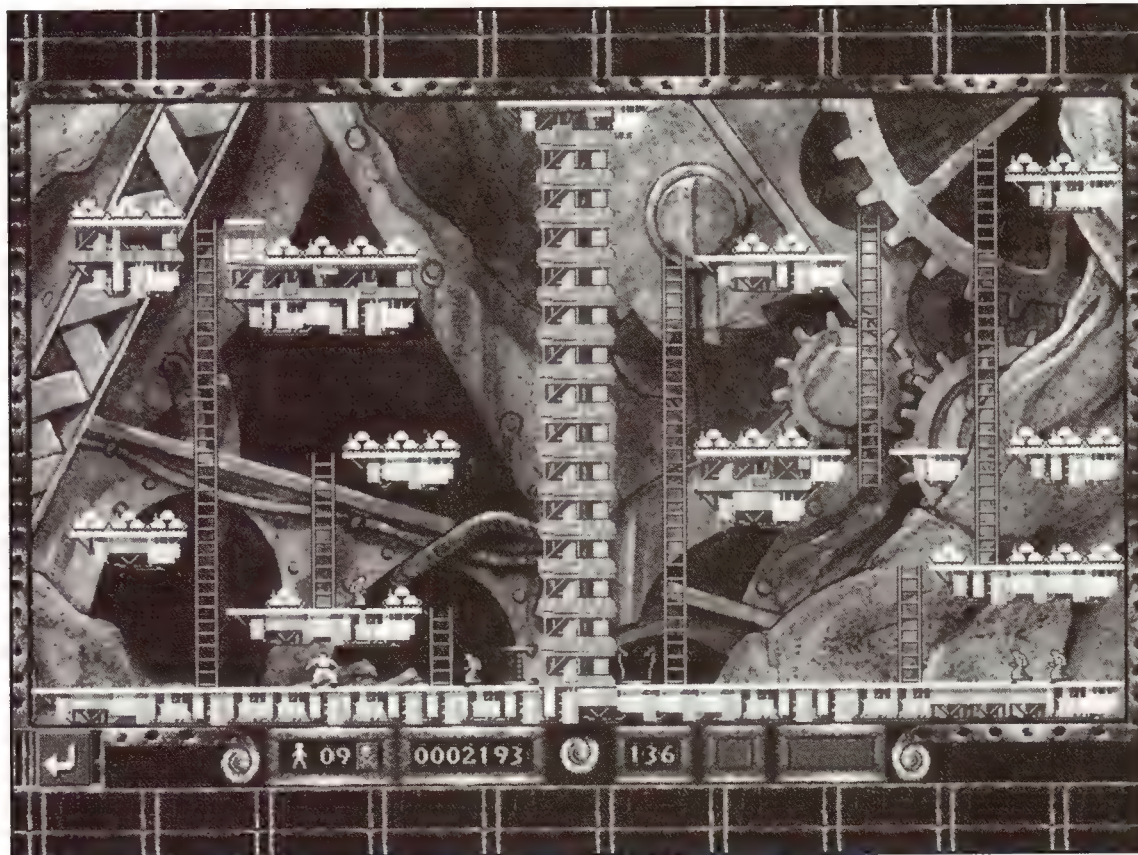
The Meltdown Metropolis is a hodgepodge of landmarks from different world-class cities, in what looks like a giant, international junk pile. Looking around, I can see traces of the Chrysler Building, Big Ben, the Eiffel Tower, and assorted public works projects. They’re all replicas, of course. You’d think the architects of the Evil Empire would be creative enough to come up with their *own* subterranean landmarks.

My laser blaster works on the scrap-metal turf just as on the other types of turf. I find two new types of tools. The *transporters* come right out of the Empire labs. Nothing like this can be found on Earth. They consist of an entrance portal and an exit portal, and they provide only one-way transportation. People have asked me what it’s like when a machine converts your entire body into pure energy. You don’t feel anything, except that I do develop a mild skin rash on my hands—kind of a weird side effect. Sometimes, when I recall that scene from the remake of *The Fly*, I worry that my genes might get jumbled together with those of a mad monk, and I’ll come out the other end looking like I haven’t bathed or shaved for 20 years. Fortunately, that doesn’t happen. Monks can beam through the transporters as well, however. Sometimes that’s to my benefit, sometimes not.

Boss bombs change my life. Setting them off is like a religious experience, to use monk rhetoric. They destroy everything within the blast radius—permanently. Nothing grows back after I detonate one of these—well, nothing except mad monks. No one has quite figured out the perfect weapon to use against them yet. I can carry only one boss bomb at a time, however, since they’re considered tools.

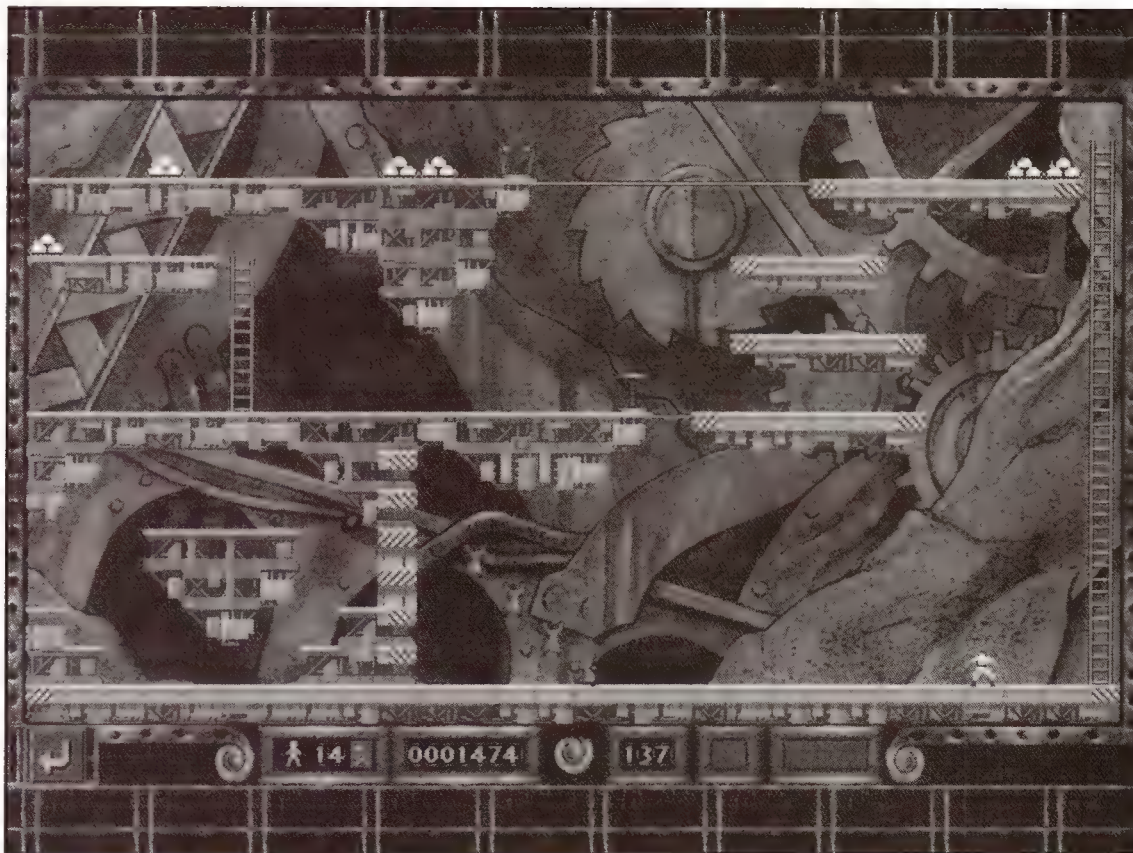
LEVEL 136

A giant scrap-metal partition divides this Meltdown cavern into two equal parts. At the bottom of it, the transporter entrance occupies my side, the western one, and the exit stands on the other side. I’ll have to clean out the western half first before zapping east.



LEVEL 136

1. Climbing up a western long ladder, I clean the scrap-metal shelves of gold ingots on my way to the top ledges. I want to keep the monks close by so that I don't get surrounded near the bottom. Hence, I lure them to a top ledge, then leap over to take care of the remaining gold at the bottom.
2. Just when I think I've finished my housekeeping chores, two monks start leaving a mess. One jangles his change in his pocket while the other leaves it on the end of the ledge. I scold them by cutting a scrap trench. I then leap into the transporter entrance.
3. I wasn't expecting a mad monk to follow me to the eastern half. But the Meltdown Metropolis isn't like the other kingdoms. The monks can follow you anywhere you go, in spite of a partition. I scoop up gold bars just like on the other side. At the top, I wait for them to line up single file so I can manipulate their movements better.



LEVEL 137

4. Using ladder positioning, I keep the monk trio on the western ridge system while I clean up the eastern side, clearing turf away with my blaster until I drop down to the cavern floor to grab the last gold stack.
5. One of the monks is hiding some gold. Using my laser blaster, I frisk all of them until the guilty party coughs up the gold. I then dash down to the southeast corner and dip into the warm waters of the aquarium arch.

LEVEL 137

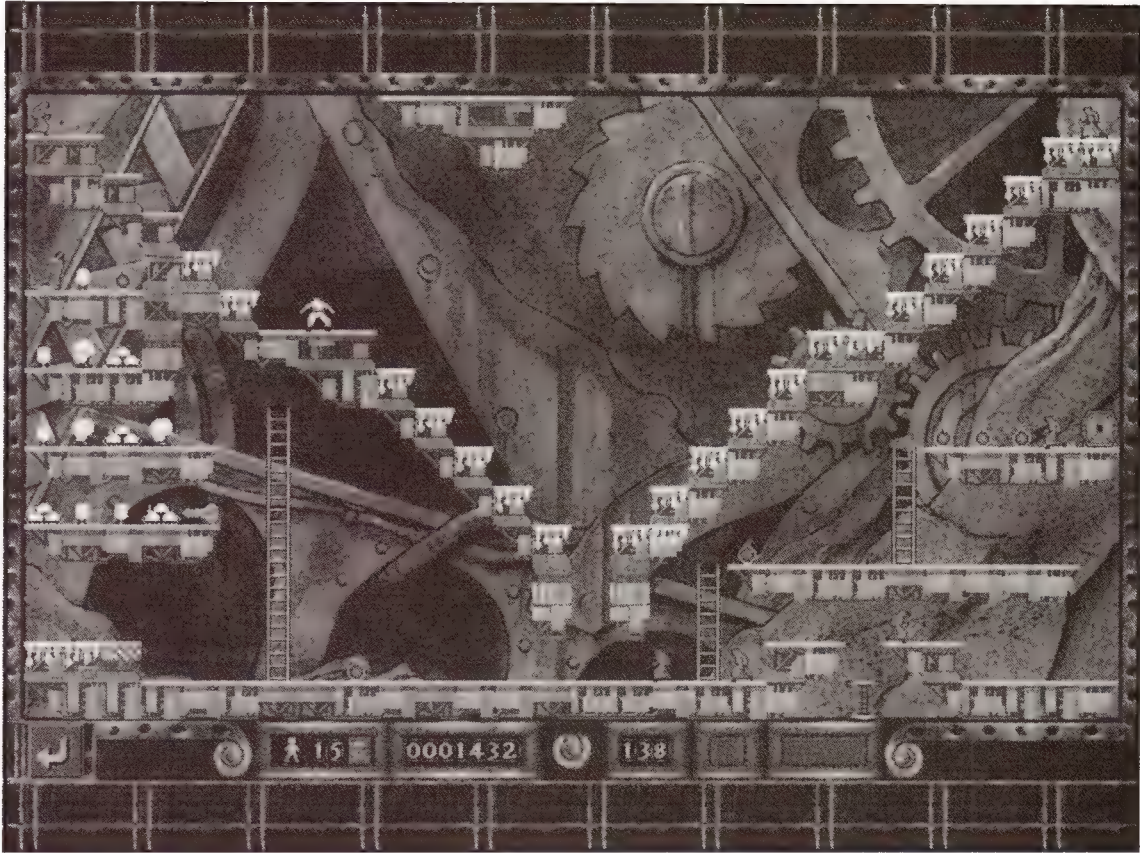
After my first transporter beam experience, I start preferring them to ladders. This Meltdown cavern contains a setup that allows me to rob the gold in the northwestern quadrant without any trouble at all, but I do have some difficulty getting around the four monks to the gray exit door.

1. I scale the eastern long ladder and traverse the roof beam until I hang directly over the transporter entrance. I merely release my grip and fall into the entry portal. I rematerialize in the northwest quadrant, where I find the bulk of the gold deposits.
2. I blast an access hole to the ledge containing the last gold stack. This invokes the gray exit door in the northeast corner. The monks are just coming down from the rafters, but when I disappear into the transporter entrance, they tumble down to the cavern floor. It isn't safe to jump down there. The eastern long ladder provides the only access to the watery portal. I work my way down to the eastern tip of the lowest ledge and wait for the monks to come down from behind.
3. With no one between me and the cavern floor, I jump into a free fall and land close to the base of the long ladder. Eager to leap into the cyber-froth, I scamper up the ladder and leave this particular Meltdown Metropolis behind.

LEVEL 138

According to my travel guide, the slime chute in this cavern used to belong to a water tower. Now the mad monk race has harnessed it for its own inscrutable purposes, among them keeping robbers like me from escaping alive.

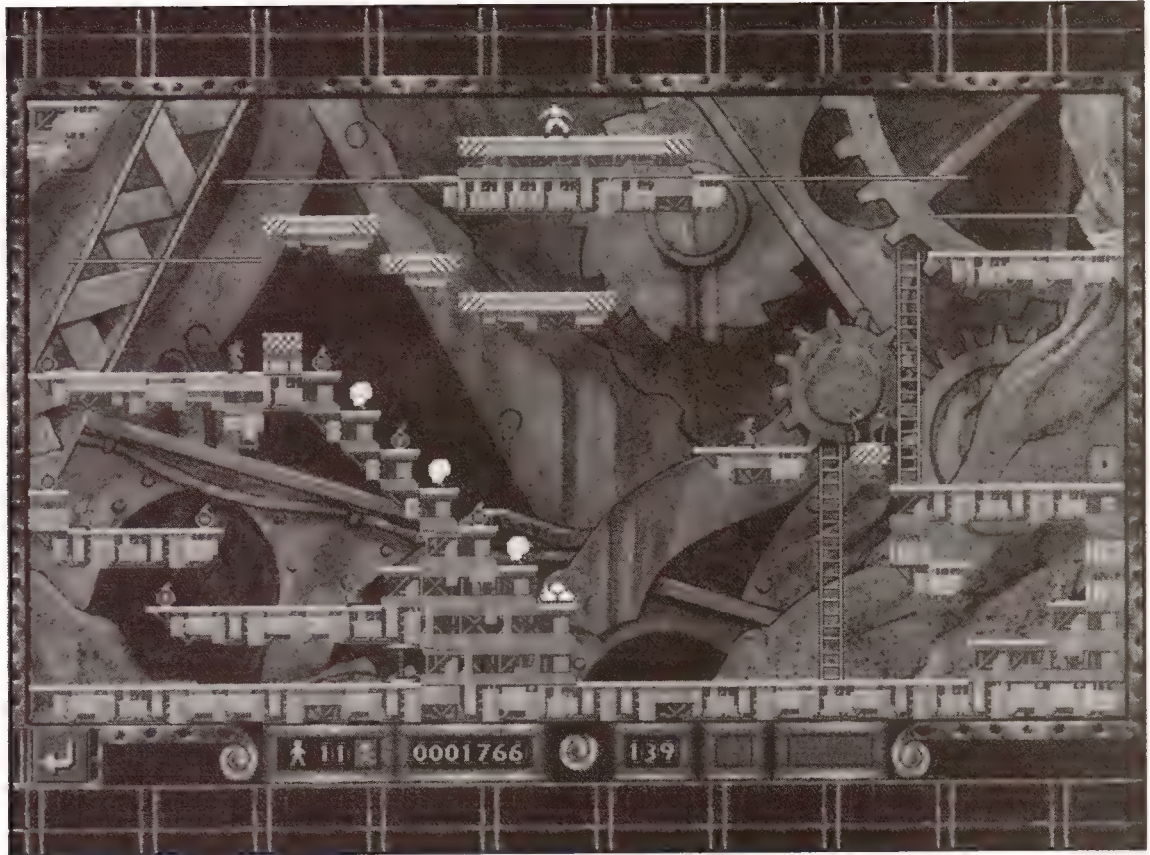
1. I hop down the slime steps and wait on the bottom step for the monks cruising the cavern floor to hop onto the western long ladder. I can't wait for long, however, since the hot and stinking breath of a mad monk is starting to singe the hairs on the back of my neck. I leap through the funnel exit.
2. I run to the vault chamber, where I have an altercation with the sentry posted there. I trap him in a scrap-metal pit, stomp on his head, then fire an access hole adjacent to him. I slip through the transporter gateway and emerge above the gold-laden tiers that front the western boundary. In here, I'm safe from the monk posse as I drop through the ledges with the aid of my laser blaster.
3. Red key in hand, I wait on the lip of the lowest ledge until all five monks clump near the top of the western long ladder. I then hop

**LEVEL 138**

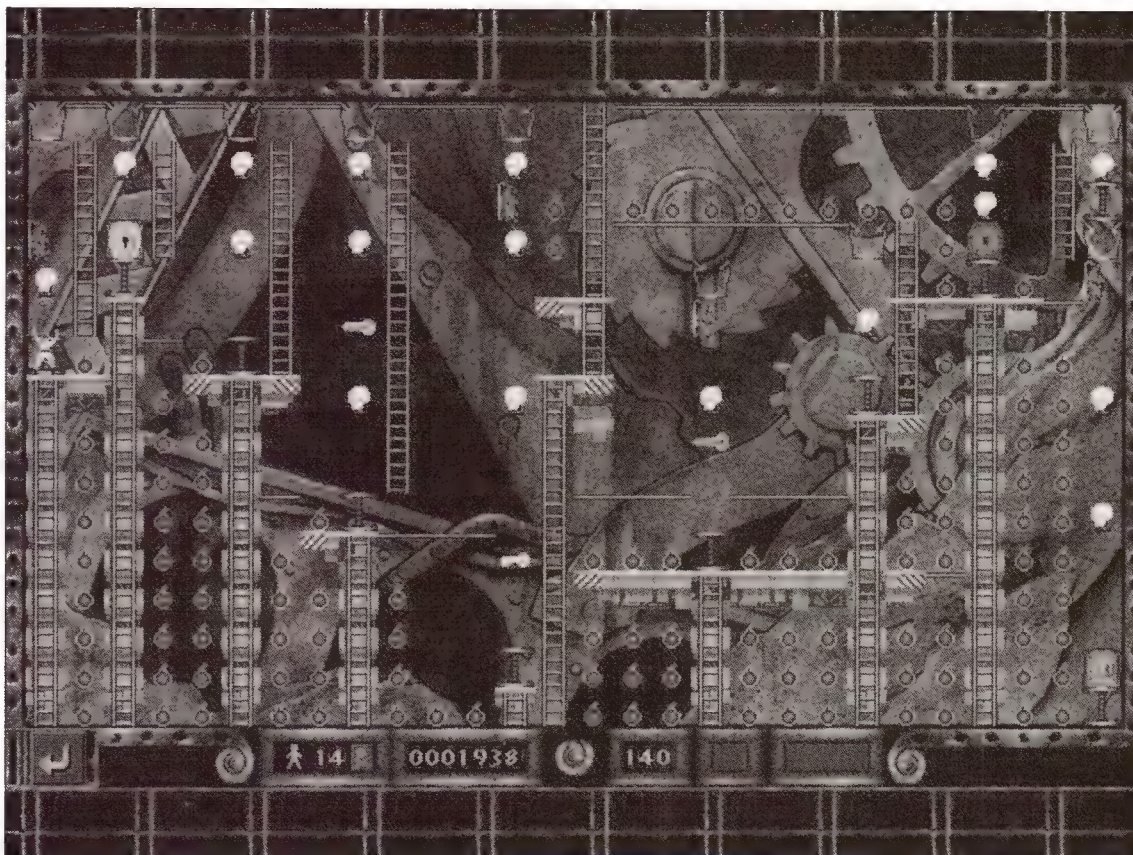
down to the cavern floor and run underneath them toward the vault chamber, where I unlock the huge steel door. As I jump into the ecto-seltzer, I catch ole smiley in the southeastern corner, looking rather glum because he doesn't get to participate.

LEVEL 139

Parts of old buildings and landmarks have been reproduced to create this cavern. The monkey bars extend like antennae from the top ledge, almost like remnants from an old cellular tower, and the steps running down the middle of the cavern look like a reshaped sprocket wheel from Big Ben. It's a sorry sight to be sure. In this cavern, I won't use the transporter at all.

**LEVEL 139**

1. I cross west over an antenna beam, then drop down to a lower monkey bar. I don't let go of the monkey bar until I reach the very end, avoiding the monk on the pit ledge just below. I don't want to wrestle with him.
2. I climb down the sprocket stairs to the cavern floor. The vault chamber is my goal. To get there, I have to trap two monks in a scrap pit on the cavern floor. I then place a small bomb next to the ladder making sure that the monk is on the east side of it so that reincarnated monks can't get me. The blast creates a nice crater, which a monk sentry from above falls into, and I ascend the ladder unharmed.
3. At the head of the first painter's ladder, I sidestep past the transporter exit to a second painter's ladder, which I ascend to a scrap ridge. A monkey bar runs parallel to the ridge, which I have to use to get to the red key on the end. I fire an access hole and drop down to the red vault, where I plunge into the digital freeway.

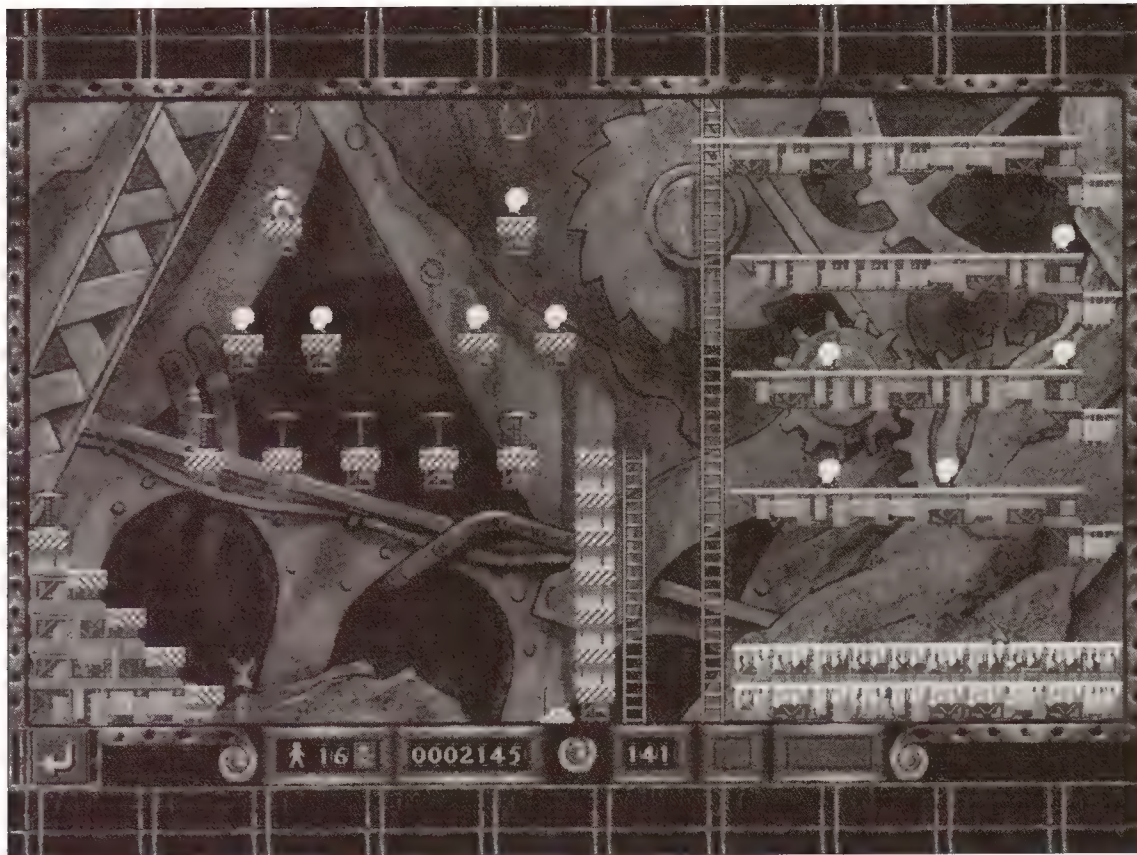


LEVEL 140

LEVEL 140

This is perhaps the strangest heist I've ever made. I don't have to lift a finger in this cavern to take the 17 golden skulls. Countless small bombs drape the cavern like strings of black pearls. I do not set off a single one of them—don't have to. Simply by zapping around through the digital network, I eventually make my way to one of three vault doors.

1. I'm not going to bother diagramming the various transporter entrances and exits here. There are nine pairs, and they don't follow a logical order at all. In fact, they seem designed for the express purpose of confusing intruders like me. I try to grasp a green key during the first round, but I'm so disoriented that I miss it the first time. I then try for a gold key and miss that one, as well. But I'll be coming by this way again, so it doesn't ultimately matter.



LEVEL 141

2. I'm not sure how many circuits I cross through this switchboard, but at some point I grab the red key. Keeping my eyes wide and alert, I manage to open the red vault door on the first pass; it's in the northeastern quadrant. Eventually, I make it back to the open door and plunge, still a little disoriented, into the sparkling exit.

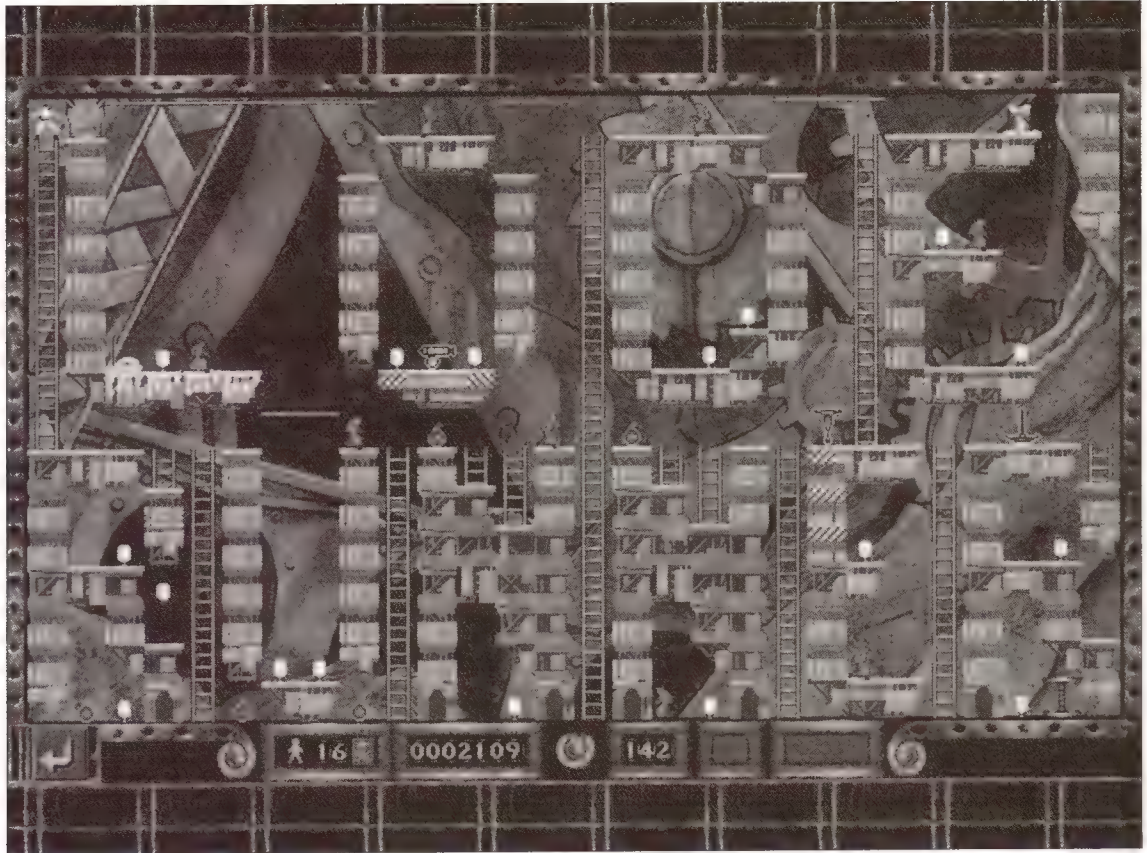
LEVEL 141

There's an old magic trick where you're supposed to guess which of three coconut halves contains a ball. The magician shuffles around the coconut shells, so you're never quite sure which one has it. This cavern reminds me of that, only this time we play with golden skulls. They're out in full view, but I have to remember which transporter entrance will take me to the right transporter exit. Once I finish the triangles on the west side, I then cross to the eastern tiers and dodge the trap-door turf. I never once have a nasty encounter with a mad monk—well, almost never.

1. From the top point of the first triangle, I hop down on a western diagonal and leap into the transporter entrance. I emerge where I began and hop down the other side of the triangle.
2. Counting from west to east, I enter the third transporter entrance and come out at the pinnacle of the second triangle. I then hop down the western side to grab the golden skull from the narrow ledge.
3. Leaping into the last transporter entrance counting from west to east, I hop down to the last golden skull. The wicked monk from the east descends the central long ladder until he is level with where I stand on top of the scrap-metal column.
4. I next have to dance a two-step to switch ladders with the wicked monk. I jump to the space of cavern floor between the painter's ladder and the long ladder. The monk follows me down there. I bait him up the painter's ladder, then sidestep over him back to the floor again. He bobs downward, but I race up the central long ladder and he pops right back up again. That's how we switch ladders.
5. The ledges contain trap-door turf, so my task isn't over yet. I climb up to the rooftop ledge and concentrate on rounding up the skulls more toward the west. I use a combination of my laser blaster and the trap-door turf to drop to the lowest ledge.
6. I drop down to the slime tier and slog over to the ladder before the wicked monk on the painter's ladder comes over to intercept me. I then climb to the tier above the highest golden skull and, using the laser blaster, stash the last three skulls. The gray exit door materializes in the corner of the second-highest tier. I drop down to the slime and loop back up to the highest tier because of the trap door turf. Then I access the electric water main by clearing away some excess scrap metal.

LEVEL 142

The billboard cavern shows more evidence of the rebel movement gaining strength. The words "LODE RUNNER" are emblazoned on the wall, fashioned out of scrap metal parts. During the tour, I find some ways to trap a number of monks permanently—to help even the odds.

**LEVEL 142**

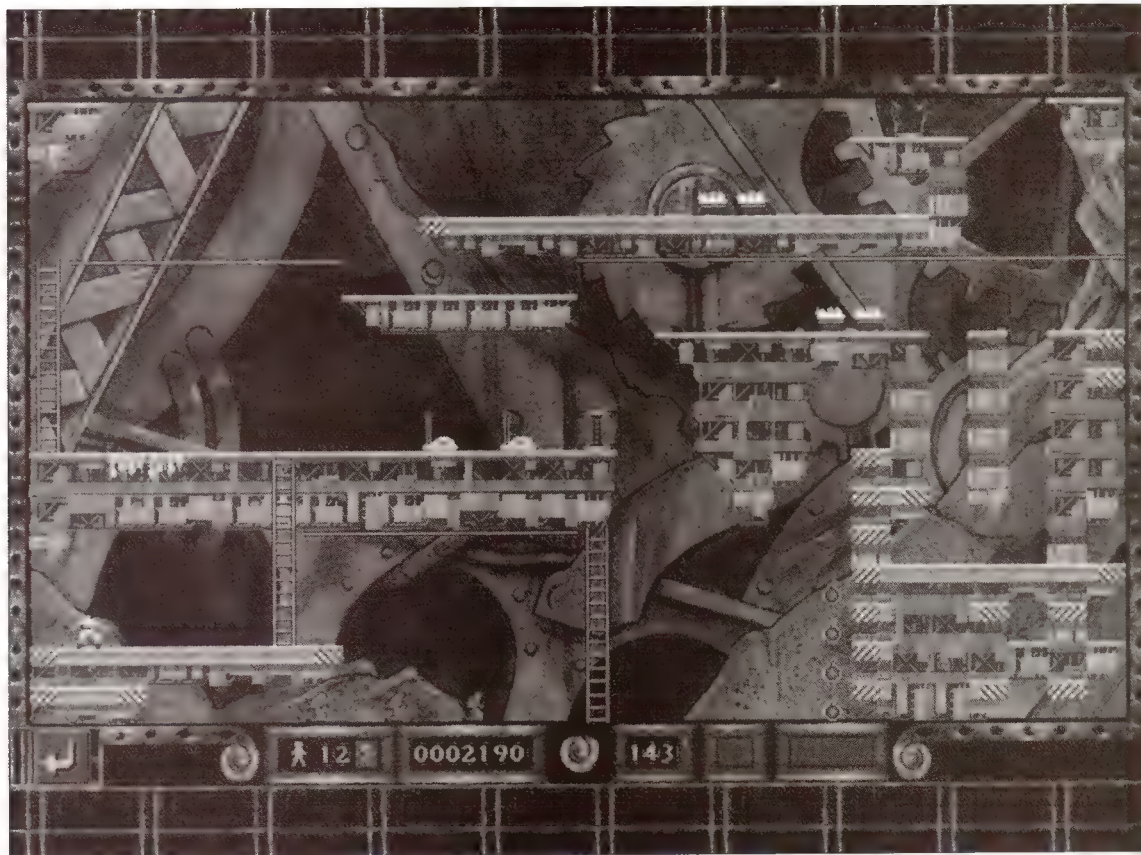
1. From the top of the “L,” I hang from the roof beam, waiting for the first monk to come within range, then drop down to the slime ledge. By waiting for him to come close to the northwest corner, I guarantee that he’ll continue on to the western long ladder. I pick up the mad monk snare and wait for the monks to align themselves on the upper ladders. I then grab the monkey bar over the “U.” At the precise moment when the first monk comes within range of the long ladders that border the “U,” I drop down into the well and fire an exit hole.
2. Four monks fall inside the “U,” but only three remain there permanently. The fourth falls into the access hole and gets crushed in the regrowth while I wait in the hideout. He comes back to his old haunt, but I prepare a snare for him on the ladder. When he upends, I complete my pillaging through the western “R.”

3. On the roof of the western “R”, I wait for the four remaining monks to fall into line behind me, then lead them single file up to the roof of the cavern. When I reach the upper “E,” I toast a turf gateway, plunder the ledges, then exit on top of the eastern “R.”
4. I don’t find any treacherous obstacles around the eastern “R” and enter the transporter in the southeastern corner. I return to my starting point in the cavern, then traverse the roof beams to the top of the “D.” It takes two blasts to enter the scrappy structure.
5. I exit the “D” through the bottom and sprint to the jackhammer. I haul it up to the rooftop and enter the “O” with just an entrance blast. Inside, I grab the two gold coins and spike through the bed-rock floor over a painter’s ladder. I then slip down the ladder and run east on the cavern floor, picking up assorted gold coins where they appear.
6. I climb the painter’s ladder to the top of the southeastern “E” and hammer down to the small ledge where a gold coin rests. The gray exit door materializes in the southeastern quadrant. I merely have to cross over to the “R” and laser-blast my way to freedom.

LEVEL 143

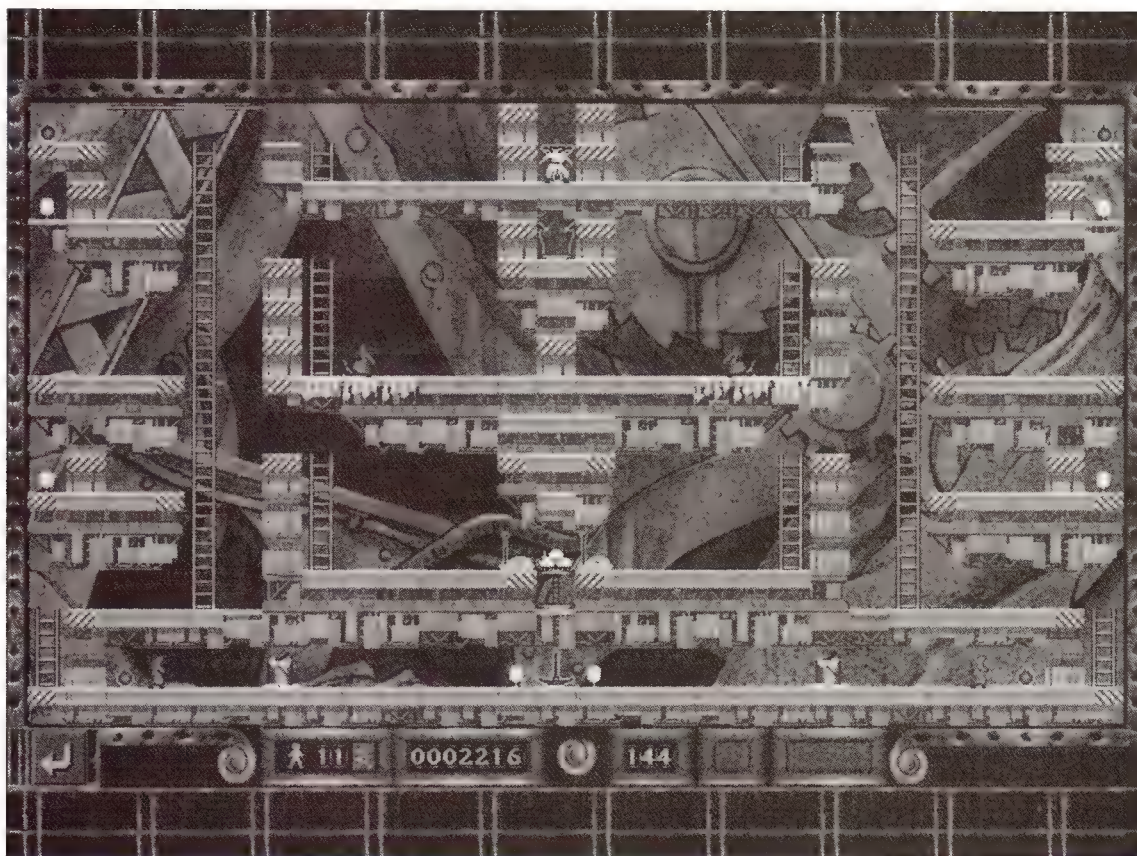
It’s fairly easy taking out the first two mad monks, and by now I know how to dodge them like the back of my hand. But there is more to this cavern than just lying snares and detonating small bombs. You have to know how to get the small bombs without getting trapped on the cavern floor.

1. I prepare the two mad-monk snares on the mid-level ridge. Before the third monk can get to me, I leap into the transporter pod and exit in the northeast corner. Falling through trap-door turf, I race west to claim the treasure chests.
2. To accomplish my next task, I’ll need one of the four small bombs lined up vertically near the cavern floor. One of them is within easy hand’s reach, if I can just get there safely without being intercepted by the free-ranging monk. Dropping down to the cavern floor and taking the bomb is easy enough, and I manage to cross overhead without incident.



LEVEL 143

3. The ridge arcs into a “C”-form right below the exit pod. I blast through the scrap turf and collect the treasure on the ledge below. This triggers the gray exit door to appear behind a heavily fortified enclosure that lines the eastern boundary. To get the three remaining small bombs, I blast a gateway to a drop chute and hook them onto my belt before I land.
4. To get past the mad monk a second time, I lure him onto the parallel beam, then release my grip. By the time I land, he’s gone airborne. It’s safe now for me to climb up to the entry pod and beam to the northeast quadrant. Using a monkey beam for access, I drop through a narrow chute and land near the fortification. A single small bomb forces entry to the gray exit door, and I dive into the electric Kool-Aid acid test.



LEVEL 144

LEVEL 144

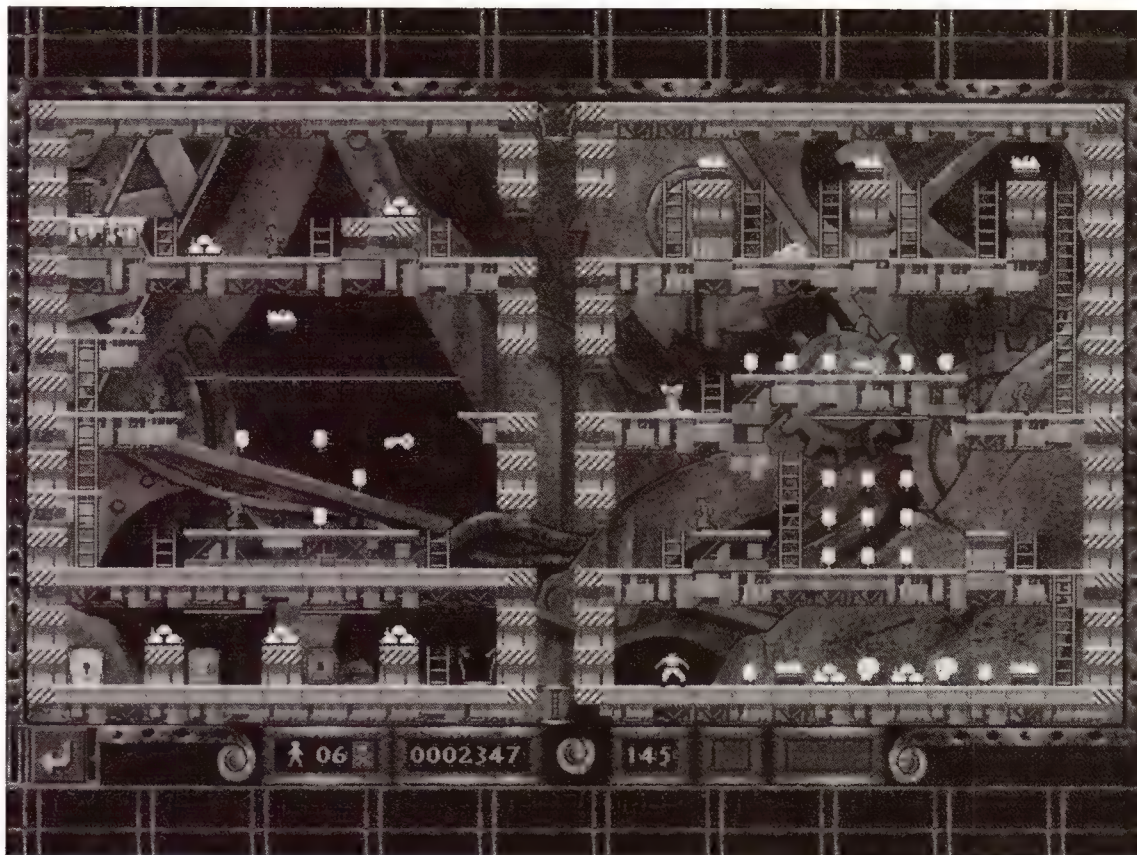
Using your imagination, you might see a jackhammer running down the center of the cavern. Or perhaps the large syringe the mad monks use to pump truth serum into their human victims. At least, it looks that way to me after I finish chipping away at the sculpture waiting to be realized from the scrap metal. This is a delicate operation in terms of planning and execution. One slight miscalculation, and it will botch my plans entirely. Though anxious, I remain calm and patient.

1. If I hammer a straight vertical shaft to the entry pod, then I'll wind up in a perpetual cyber-loop. Instead, when I come down to the middle ledge, I step west and carve a shaft adjacent to the one I started. The mad monk comes down through the shaft behind me,

.....

but by then I've stepped into the entry pod. When I land on the middle ledge a second time, I spike a shaft to the east. Turf provides support on both sides. My preparation now complete, I grab a mad monk snare and jump down to the broad, shallow floor chamber.

2. Under intense pressure, I plant the snare directly under where I put the jackhammer down on the ledge above. After the monk whips upward, I toss slime at the other monk and then detonate a small bomb at the eastern edge of the floor chamber. As soon as I leave the chamber, the free-standing monk freezes. I want to keep him west of the trap-door turf for when I come back later to trap him. It's easy to overlook the small bombs in the northern corners; they're critical to my success later. On the way up the eastern long ladder, I pluck a small bomb from the northeastern corner, then drop down to get the second snare.
3. I set the snare close to the edge of the chamber—not the most desirable location, since I'll have to blow up the monk later, and that will set him free to roam about after he reincarnates. I snatch the gold coins and detonate a small bomb on the other side. Rising up the western long ladder, I fetch the small bomb in the northwest corner and start to work on the ledges. Getting the top coin simply involves chewing through the bedrock spine of a "T"-ledge. But to get to the lower coin, I have to strip the bedrock caps off the ledges right below. This process is a painstaking one.
4. When I finish with the top-middle ledge, I begin on the bottom one. In both cases, I have to start with the blocks touching the long ladder so that I won't get trapped. I use the top-middle ledge to pinpoint my drops. When I nab the coin, I drop down into the floor chamber and blow out the eastern wall. The mad monk materializes on the western side, so I'm free to start work on the eastern one.
5. Because of the striking symmetry of this Meltdown cavern, I repeat the same process on the eastern edge and seize both gold coins. The twin exit doors spring forth on the roof ledge. I climb the eastern long ladder and traverse the roof beams to get there. I've worked hard for this gold.



LEVEL 145

LEVEL 145

I thought lift operators went out in the 1950s. And yet, here are mad monks giving me a lift across a giant chasm that splits this Meltdown Metropolis cavern asunder. They form a moving chain of floating frocks that remind me of Mary Poppins. Don't ever tell a monk he reminds you of Mary Poppins.

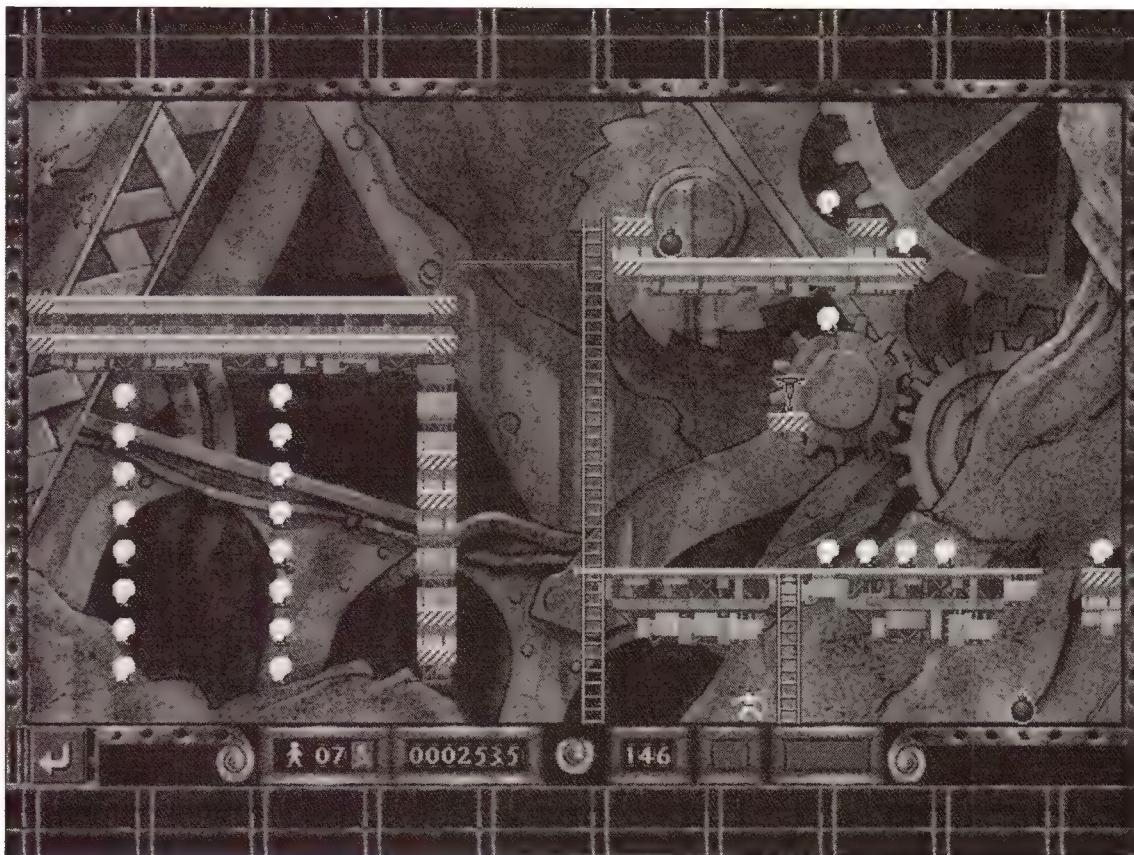
1. From my starting stance on the eastern cavern floor, I make a very favorable start vacuuming up the gold there. I trap the mad monk on turf scrap above, stomping on his head until he gets crushed in the regrowth. I pick the gold coins from their suspended state and wait for the next ferry crossing. Now on the west side, I trap both monks in a scrap trench. As they reincarnate in the elevator shaft, I finish cleaning up the chamber and then make a ferry crossing back to the western side.

2. This chamber has a dais in the middle of the ledge. I have to vaporize the edge with my laser blaster in order to make enough time and space to clear a scrap pit for the raging monk. I climb on his head and check my diving watch to predict the regrowth. While he changes jobs and becomes a lift boy, I make the ferry crossing to the northwest ledge, taking along a snare for good measure. Setting it atop the step ladder, I catch the monk sentry. At least he'll remain a sentry, if out of commission.
3. All the monks are now dispatched, but my work is not yet complete. A gold treasure chest hangs underneath my ledge, so I quickly stash that, then take the elevator ferry to the other side to fetch the green key. Now I'm ready to enter the transporter pod in the northwest corner.
4. I emerge in the southwest floor chamber. Since I have the key for the green door, I first clean up the gold bars from the retaining walls, then drop into the tight space, turn the key in the green door, and jump into the mountain dew.

LEVEL 146

Finally, I have my first go with boss bombs. These enormous balls of dynamite are actually quite light to carry around—they weigh just a bit more than small bombs—and they pack a terrible blow to any piece of non-monk matter in the vicinity. Unfortunately, I have some tough choices to make. I have to vaporize some items of gold in order to complete the cavern raid. It won't be the first time, either.

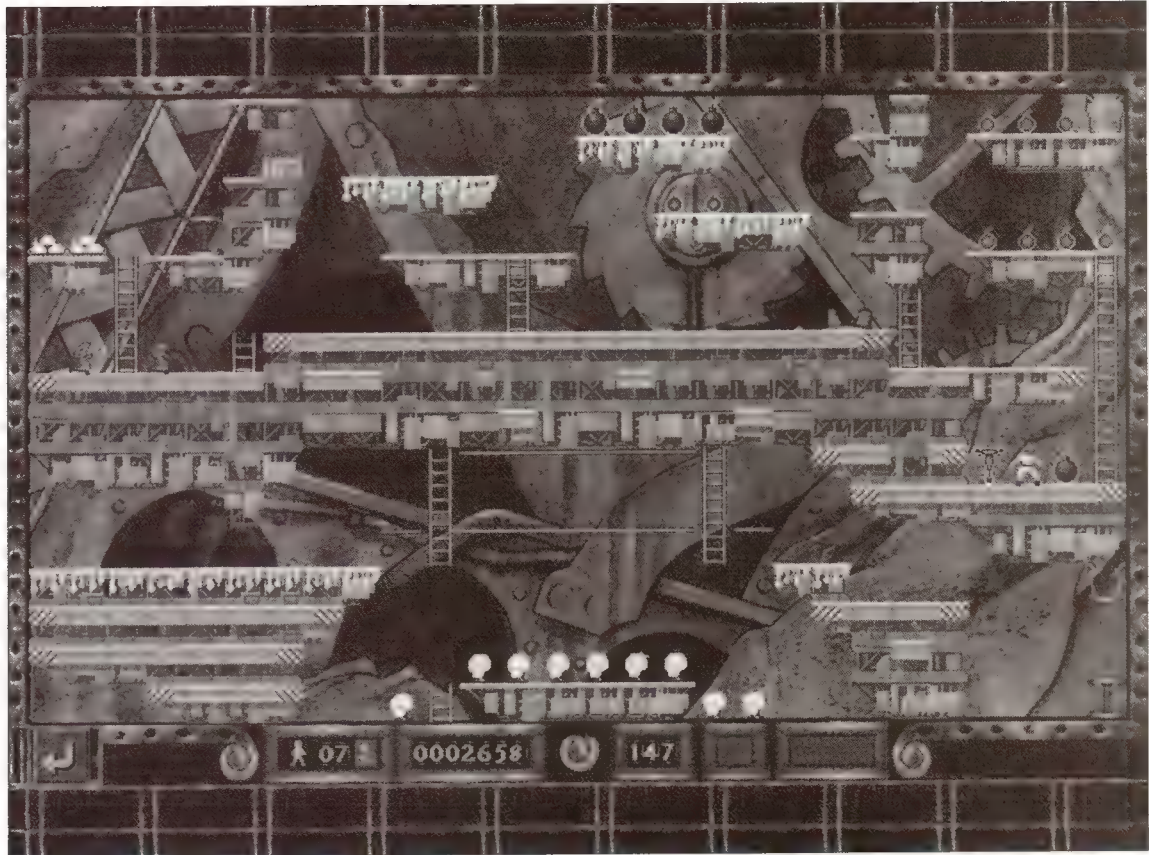
1. I climb up a painter's ladder and carry a boss bomb to the edge of the ridge. I place it on the ridge itself, not on the cleft portion below. The blast pulverizes the golden skull that sits on an eastern-boundary ledge. Two monks find me on the ridge, so I cut a turf trench and dash overhead.
2. To get to the jackhammer, I have to demolish the eastern half of the top ridge. That means lost gold. Wiping a tear, I light the fuse and wait for the worst to be over. I land on the ledge below holding the jackhammer, then hop off to the lower ridge. I have to trap the monks in the same place before ascending the long ladder to the western bedrock tier.

**LEVEL 146**

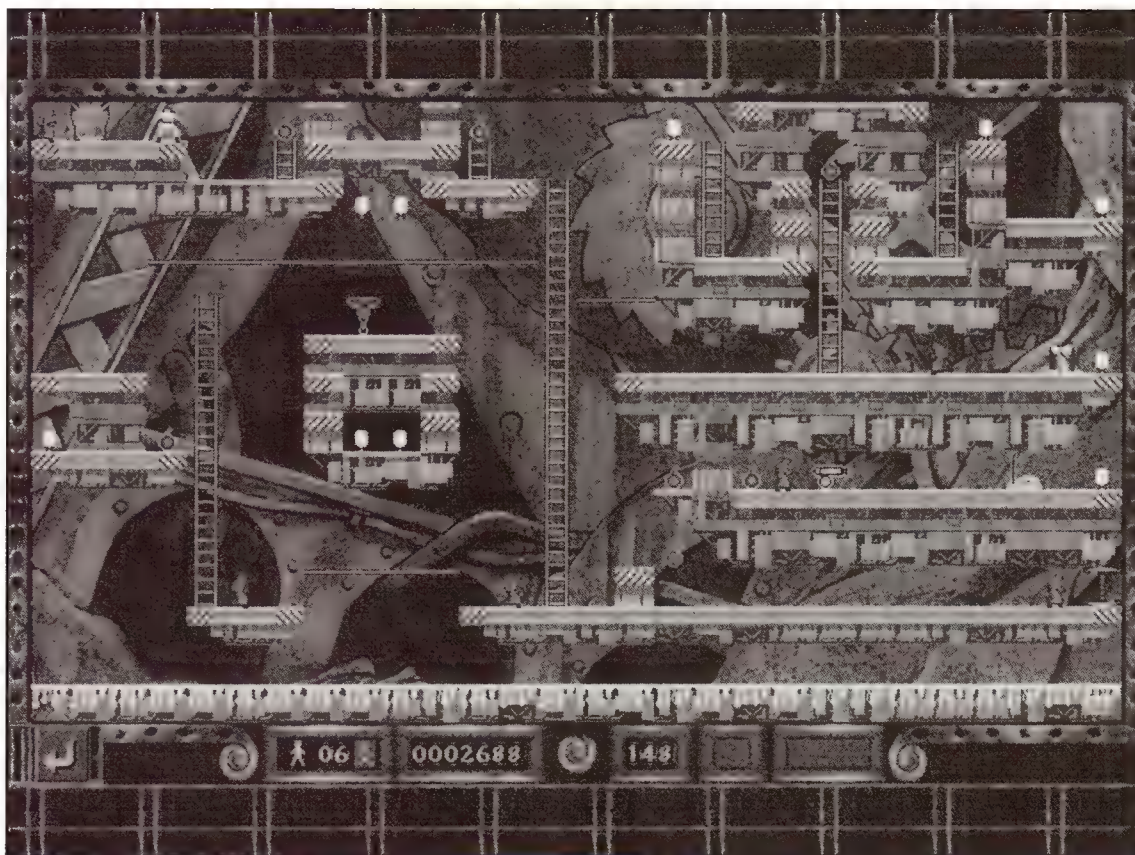
3. With the aid of the jackhammer, I pierce through the bedrock and sail downward over the vertical strand of golden skulls. I have a close call on the way back to the long ladder, but make it up in time to cut through to the second strand of death's-heads. The gray exit door materializes underneath the bottom ridge, and I take a running leap into the bluish portal.

LEVEL 147

Fortunately this time I don't have to sacrifice any gold when I detonate the boss bombs. But they play just as critical a role as the small network of transporter pods and the jackhammer. Although ladders are few, I do position myself on the turf at intervals to keep the two monks to the northeast quadrant. They have a fixed portal in the floor chamber, which would cause all kinds of havoc if I toast them in a blast.

**LEVEL 147**

1. I grab the boss bomb and sprint west across the mid-elevation bedrock tier. I get to the painter's ladder ahead of the monks and dash over their heads to the northwest quadrant. After I pack the gold ingots, I step into the entry pod. I emerge from the exit pod in the northeast corner. The monks approach across the tier, but when I hop down below the bedrock, they switch directions and huddle behind the barrier, as if suddenly frightened.
2. Working down to the floor chamber requires several stages. The boss bomb does most of the work I place it on the eastern side of the mid-elavator tier. But I need the jackhammer to remove a section of bedrock left standing. Using my laser blaster, I clear an access hole and leap through the gap.
3. I grab the jungle beam and traverse west to the last golden skull. I then run over a turf platform that supports a row of skulls. When I reach the last one, the gray exit door appears in the southwest corner, buried behind a massive amount of thick bedrock. I stand,



LEVEL 148

meanwhile, in front of a scrap barricade. It takes two small bombs to blast through it and enter the transporter pod.

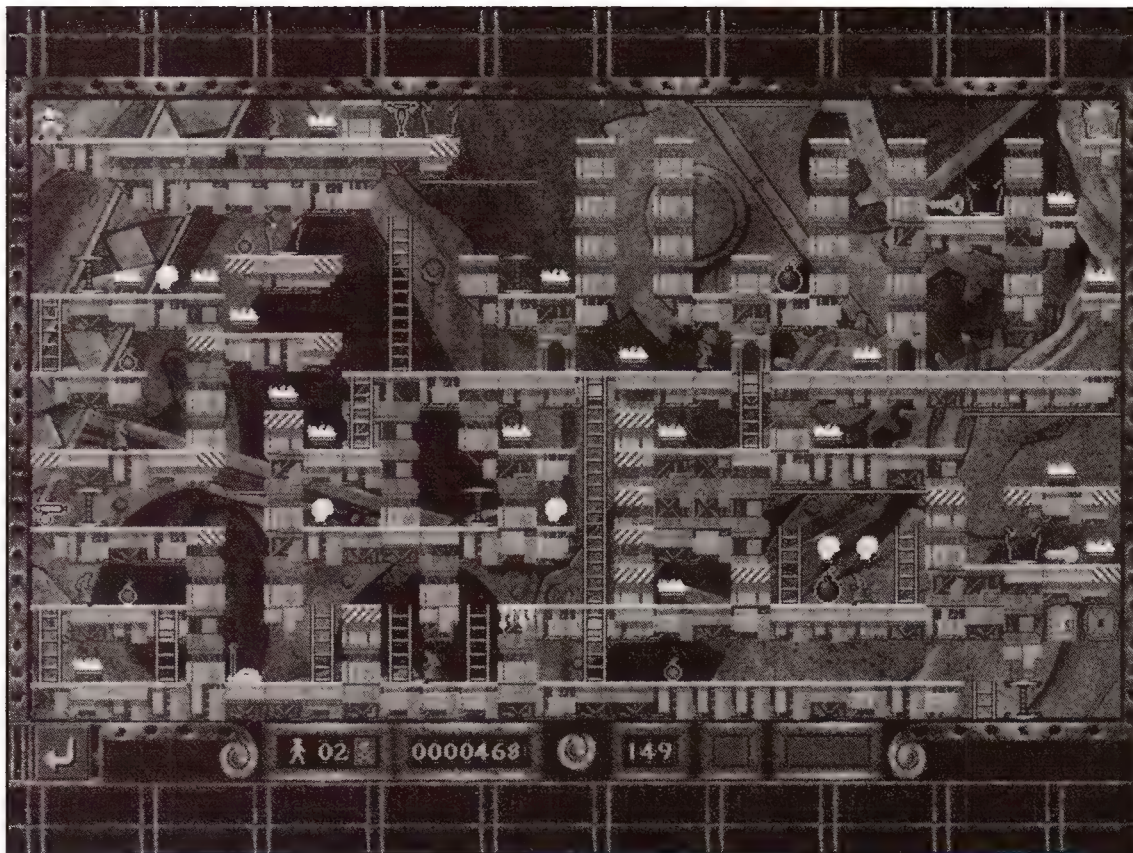
4. Four boss bombs lie on a slime-coated ledge at the top of the cavern. Rooftop ladders allow me to cross over the blast crater to the ledge. I exchange my jackhammer for the first boss bomb; it would be useless against the slime coating above the southwestern enclosure. It takes two boss bombs to open up the bedrock fortress, but when the smoke clears, I charge into the luminous neon mist.

LEVEL 148

This isn't the first time that I've confronted six mad monks to loot a cavern, but now that the end of my plundering is near, I can tell the Empire is turning on the heat. Using most if not all of the tools available, I work from the western half of the cavern, which has its own unique character-

istics, to the eastern half. The pod in the southeastern corner transports me back to the western half at the end of this tour.

1. In the northwestern quadrant, I grab the jackhammer, then trap a mad monk in a scrap pit and blast an exit hole next to him. The monkey beam lets me cross to the roof of a suspended bedrock enclosure. I chew away the western wall and grab the gold coin, but trap-door turf leads me to the beam below before I can grab the second coin. I'll have to loop around to the other side. But first, on my way up the long ladder, I stop at the 24-hour mart and bust the turf barrier to get the coin stored in the register.
2. Looping overhead, I come down on the roof of the enclosure a second time and chew away at the eastern wall. The gold coin falls into my hands. I cross to the base of the central long ladder and wait for the stars of the subterranean water ballet to rain down from above. This gives me sufficient advantage to charge up to the rooftop enclosure, where two coins are locked inside a turf enclosure. A small bomb blast earns me admission. I'll have to come back a second time to spike through the second block of bedrock.
3. After I get the second coin from the rooftop enclosure, I head east to the scrap bower. I use the bomb inside the bower. The blast creates passages to the east and west, and I have enough time to collect the coins from both sides without getting trapped in the turf regrowth. I then head for the extreme eastern edge and plow through the bedrock with my jackhammer, collecting gold coins in the process.
4. Nearing the end of the tour, just when I think I've collected all of the gold, I realize that more must be hidden somewhere. I plant a snare where I found it and frisk the monk sentry. Unfortunately, he has nothing on him. I exchange my jackhammer for the canister of befuddlement gas and detonate a small bomb at the base of a turf wall. Not only do I ignite a chain reaction, but three gold coins are revealed. The chimes ring forth, and a gray exit door materializes in the northwest corner. I have only to step into the transporter pod to be beamed into the fibrous light.



LEVEL 149

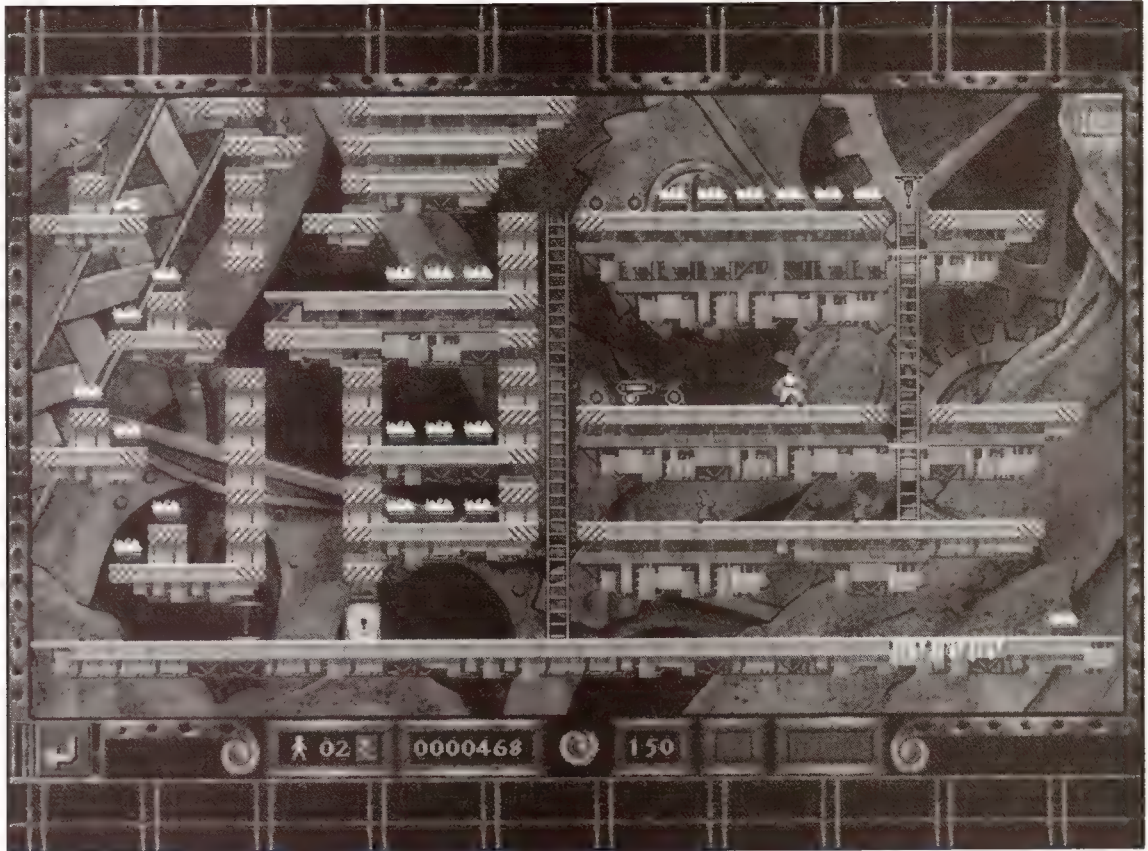
LEVEL 149

I examine this cavern carefully, but no images come to mind—only marvel at its unparalleled complexity. Thus far, I haven't encountered anything so intricate or demanding. But there are really no new moves, only new sequences. Once I master the proper sequence, the rest fall into place quite naturally.

1. I have to trap the monk twice in the turf, but I don't want to kill him. I want to leave him behind so that he won't cause me further trouble in other parts of the cavern. Dropping through the access hole, I ignite a small bomb in its original place. The blast removes the monk sentry, and I venture farther down as I prepare to do battle with the monk sentry in the southwest chamber.

-
2. I loop around the ladder supports, leaving the bomb in such a way as to incinerate the monk and blast through the turf wall at the same time. After all, small bombs are in short supply. The hot wind blows up at me as I leap through the blast aperture and hurry to set a snare for the monk sentry in the winding chamber of ladders and columns. He succumbs to my design. I dispatch his cohort in an ordinary but effective turf pit and dash east along the cavern floor.
 3. Through this next phase, I connect through two sets of transporters. I use only these two sets; the others lead to dead ends or entrapment. From the gateway pod in the southeast corner, I beam up to the exit pod in the northwest corner, near where I incinerated my first monk. Collecting various baubles and bits, I loop down and wait for the last of the marching monk brigade to disappear into the second gateway pod in the hook of the giant "J." I find that by hiding in a cleft, those monks who stand before the central long ladder will duck under; those who come after will storm me in my grave. It all has to do with sequence and timing as I make it safely to the second gateway pod.
 4. At this phase, I plunder the central region of the cavern. Three hideouts line the mid-elevation bedrock tier. I choose the middle one and wait for the monks to huddle near the southeast gateway pod. I then pounce on golden skulls and treasure chests that lie about the ledges and shelves of this area. The monks react, but too slowly. And if they get too close, I can always duck into another hideout.
 5. Not far from the eastern boundary stands a lone monk sentry. He has the lonely task of guarding a small enclosure with some very rich assets. In addition to the gold in there, I covet the boss bomb. We play around the jungle beams in there a bit, and each time I dodge ahead of him, moving him closer and closer to where I want to place my next small bomb.
 6. Eventually, I lead the lonely monk up the western painter's ladder, where I've placed a small bomb on the middle rung. He walks dead into the center of the blast, which also clears a nice opening into the neighboring chamber, where a pot of gold sits. I blast an exit and run toward the southeast gateway pod, then transfer to the pod in the "J" hook.

7. Though a golden skull still resides in a small alcove to the west, I target the treasure cache in the southeast quadrant, just above the vault chamber. I leave the green key there and use my last small bomb to pierce through the turf flooring. Beneath the hard turf, I find trap-door turf. Not only that, but now it dawns on me that the southeastern gateway pod prevents access to the vault chamber. Stepping through it sends me back to the exit pod in the northwest quadrant. Once I get the last bit of gold, this matter will have to be fixed. For now, I return to my favorite cleft and wait for the monks to settle.
8. Shedding a tear, I plant the boss bomb in the cleft just to the west of the painter's ladder. The blast annihilates the golden skull, the last bit of gold in the cavern. The chimes intone, and a group of ladders materialize overhead, spanning over the large block letters in the upper and eastern portions of the cavern. I lead the monks single file up to the top of the "U" for two reasons: I need the boss bomb to deactivate the southeast gateway pod, and I want to trap the monks inside the well. While I pass through the trap-door turf, they get trapped on hard turf. I repeat this exercise several times until I imprison three monks inside the "U"; another falls into the "J" hook of his own accord and doesn't seem interested in stepping into the gateway pod. Maybe he's just tired.
9. Now I'm free to remove the southeastern pod without interference. I set the boss bomb on top of the step ladder and run clear of the blast radius. The explosion eliminates the pod and the surrounding turf, but does not harm the vault doors. I then loop up to get the green key and jump down to the cavern floor.
10. The step ladder beneath the green vault door was destroyed in the firestorm, but I find that by leaping over it from the side of the red vault door, I can at least open it. When the familiar vibrant mist radiates through, I climb up the red-vault stairs and leap through the green portal.



LEVEL 150

LEVEL 150

The grand finale cavern of the Evil Empire, the sum of all my fears, the anticipated clear and present danger, the hunt for red monks in October, comes as a kind of anticlimax. The previous cavern almost wiped me out from exhaustion. This one is like a pleasant springtime trounce. But don't get me wrong: I relish every moment of this brain teaser, and I'm relieved that I won't have to ponder winding intricacies as much as in the former. As long as I avoid falling to the cavern floor, I'll make it out of Hades intact.

1. I reach for the gas canister and promptly douse the two mad monks as they come to greet me. While picking up small bombs, I descend to the ledge below to get the gold treasure chest. The one above, had I leaped off it, would lead me on a perilous dive to the cavern

floor and an inauspicious ending. The lower ledge, on the other hand, leads me directly to the treasure chest.

2. From green clouds to red ones, you can only detain monks—you can't actually kill them. I wrap them in a cloud of befuddlement gas on the cavern floor, then race up to the top tier to rake the gold into my rucksack. I have to set down the canister to take the jackhammer, but this doesn't dissuade the monks from coming in for a second try. I plant a small bomb at the head of the long ladder and consume them in a fiery red cloud of retribution.
3. Another monk guards the top deck of stacked enclosures in the middle of the cavern. I drill down through the bedrock partition and invite the monk to walk into a mine. The blast removes him from the scene. I stash the gold and then attack the western edge of the enclosures, halting at each story to duck in and retrieve the gold hidden inside.
4. Dropping down to the cavern floor, I head west to the gateway pod and zap up to the top of the inverted mushroom ledges. The gold falls swiftly into my clutches, and I reenter the pod a second time to clear an obstacle to the vault door on the other side of the uppercase "J." After I exit the pod a third time, I exchange the jackhammer for the golden key.
5. I jump down to the top of the giant "J" and then drop in front of the golden vault door. The golden key slips into the lock, and I depart the caverns of the Evil Empire for the very last time.

CONCLUSION

That does it for this cowboy. Now I believe it's time for me to head back to my yacht, where I'll enjoy the fruits of my labor and reflect on how hard I worked on this project. In all honesty, I'm a little sad, for there are no more worlds to conquer. I want another odyssey. Cybernauts always need new virtual territories to explore.

By now I've gathered enough money to bail out the S&L's, finance the world debt, feed the hungry, and, if I scrimp here and there, perhaps even pay off the federal budget deficit. Then again, that might overdraw my balance. Maybe Robin Leach can find someone else to help chip in.

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